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ST. JOHN, i.–xii.

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ROMANS (completion)

FIRST CORINTHIANS

T. & T. CLARK
Edinburgh and London

THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE BIBLE

EDITED BY THE REV.

JAMES HASTINGS, D.D.

EDITOR OF "THE EXPOSITORY TIMES" "THE DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE" "THE DICTIONARY OF CHRIST AND THE GOSPELS" AND "THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS"

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THE WORD.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.—John i. 1.

1. THE text seems speculative and hard to understand. But St. John wrote the Fourth Gospel with a practical aim, and in language which he meant to be intelligible. What his aim was he states in the end of the twentieth chapter—the chapter with which his Gospel originally ended (he himself seems to have added the twenty-first at a later time). He says: "These are written, (1) that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and (2) that believing ye may have life in his name." No doubt his language was more familiar to his Jewish readers than it is to us. But we ought to know the Old Testament, and although the special expression he uses here, *Logos* or *Word*, is not found exactly in this way in the Old Testament, the idea is there. For in the Old Testament God constantly makes Himself known and seen. Now, "No man hath seen God at any time." It is therefore not God the Father; but He whom the Father sanctifies and sends into the world—it is He who appeared to Abraham, to Moses, to Joshua, to Samuel. This Person may well be called God's Word, since His mission is always to reveal the will of God, to speak for God, to speak as God. By and by this Person, whom the Old Testament writers call the Angel of the Lord, comes into the world to dwell there for a season, taking human flesh, and He is called not the Word or Revealer now, but Jesus the Saviour, for He is come to save His people from their sins.

2. St. John works backwards. He came to know the Word first as Jesus. He knew Him as a Man among men. He went

with Him to the marriage feast. He saw Him sit weary on the wayside well. He was near when the cry, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," rent the silent night. He saw Him nailed to the cross. He knew that He remained there till He was dead. But he also at that wedding feast saw Him turn the water into wine. He heard Him say, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." He caught the prayer, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," and the promise, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." He started thus with a man among men, but a Man who was more than men, and as soon as He had ascended into heaven, John and the rest felt that the first thing for them was to know and to make known who He was. They had the facts of the life of Jesus on the earth. They saw that that human life had passed into the eternal. This, then, was what they learned first, that it had come out of the eternal. It looked before as well as after. The Jesus whom they knew had been before they knew Him. He had been the Revealer of God to men in Old Testament times, the Logos, the Word. He had been the Agent in the creation (which of itself is simply a revelation). He had been with the Father before the creation of the world. "In the beginning was the Word."

3. St. John started with Jesus of Nazareth, and he has reached this: "In the beginning was the Word." But he cannot rest in that. Jesus was the Word in Old Testament times and earlier, because He uttered God's will. He came into the world to utter it. But He did not separate Himself from God by coming into the world. You must not say that the Word is here and God is yonder. If He could thus be separated from God, He could not perfectly reveal God. He must be in closest proximity, in proximity of heart and will. He must rather *be* God to men than *represent* God to men. And so the Old Testament writers speak of the Angel of the Lord, and next moment let the Angel of the Lord say, "*I* am the God of Abraham." And in like manner St. John says that all the while Jesus was the Word and was coming into the world to reveal God's will to men, He was "with God." St. John caught the thought from Jesus, "As thou, Father, art in me and I in thee." Indeed,

St. John caught all these thoughts from Jesus, and we may trace them all from words of Christ he himself has reported.

4. Starting from Jesus of Nazareth, St. John has now reached two thoughts: Jesus is the pre-existent Word, and though He was continually revealing God's will to the world, He never left the Father's presence. He was more than in constant communication with God. He did more than come and go between the earth and heaven. He was always with God. He was always, not only *doing* God's will, but *willing* it. And that leads inevitably to a third thought. If the will of the Word and of God is one, then the Word and God are themselves one. There is God the Father, whom no man hath seen or can see. There is also God the Son, who constantly made Himself seen and known from the beginning, and in St. John's own day had flesh and dwelt among men, so that St. John and the rest could say of Him: "We have heard, we have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon, and our hands have handled." And these two are one God. It is a long way to go from Jesus of Nazareth, "whose father and mother we know"; but the way was open and unobstructed, and Jesus Himself showed it. St. John, who saw Jesus nailed to the cross on Calvary by rough Roman soldiers, says at last, "In the beginning was (Jesus) the Word, and (Jesus) the Word was with God, and (Jesus) the Word was God." And he writes these things "that believing ye may have life in his name."

I.

The Word.

1. Let us look in at this writer's workshop, and watch him choosing his themes and even at times his very language: or rather let us listen to the religious teacher as, with disciples around him, he proceeds to recall, and probably dictate to one of them, his reminiscences of his Lord, and, before doing so, tries to show the central importance of the life which he is going to illustrate.

That life, he has come to see more and more, was no accident in history; each saying, each action had grown in meaning as he

had watched each prophecy fulfilled, and seen the power of each act repeated in the experience of the Christian Church; the life was of eternal significance; it came from God and told of God in every detail; it was the act of that God who had ever been revealing Himself: it was a link, the most important link, in a chain of continuous revelation. Now Jewish and Greek and Christian thought alike had long been feeling after some means of expressing this method of revelation, some Being who could mediate between the infinite God and the finite creature, who could act as God's organ in creation and in providence. And the writer had seen Jesus Christ control creation, he had known His care for himself and for the Church; of this, at least, he is sure, that, however that Being is to be defined, He is one with Jesus Christ.

What title then shall he choose out of the many descriptions and definitions which had been given of Him? Among these many he has practically a choice of two alternatives, which stood out prominently from among all other titles. Shall he call Him "The Wisdom of God" or shall he call Him "The Word of God"? There was much to be said for either. "The Wisdom" would recall at once the whole Wisdom literature of the Old Testament; and it would have support in our Lord's own words (Matt. xi. 19; Luke vii. 35, xi. 49). But it would have this drawback; it would suggest primarily the thought of a quality immanent in the mind of God, the wisdom of the Divine architect, the plan in His mind on which all material things were modelled. But our writer's aim is rather to show how God has been *revealed, interpreted* to man; his thought is not primarily that the world had been the perfect work of a wise Creator and Jesus Christ the climax of His work, but that ever since creation there had been a revealing of God to man, and that Jesus Christ had been the fullest organ of that Revelation. *The Word*, then, will be the better title for his purpose.

2. This title will have many advantages. It will lead up naturally to the stress which the writer wants to lay on the words of Jesus as being spirit and life, and on His discourses as being the utterances of Him who claimed to be the Truth: they will be sayings of One who had already been described as "the faithful

and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." And "the Word" also has its roots in the Old Testament; it recalls each "God said" of creation: it recalls the Psalmist's summary of creation, and his use and that of the Apocryphal writers of "God's Word" as the agent of His Providence in healing and delivering His chosen people: above all, it will take up the Rabbinic reverence, which when speaking of God's manifestation of Himself to man substituted for God the title "the Word of God," "the memra." In using it, he will be speaking of the same Being of whom the Jewish Rabbis thought when they spoke of God protecting Noah by "his Word," making a covenant between Abraham and "his Word," of Moses bringing forth the people to meet "the Word of God" at Mount Sinai. There was one further reason why the title would help his purpose; for through Philo its Greek philosophical meaning had become current throughout the eastern religious world, and even in Christian circles; much of the language associated with it had been adopted by St. Paul and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews; and yet there were striking points in which the Philonian doctrine might mislead Christian disciples: he would be able to guard against this, while he stated shortly, clearly, authoritatively, what "the Word" really was.[1]

¶ A word is the true expression of him who utters it. We have various ways of communicating with one another, but the chief of all these ways is by speech. Within this intricate apparatus, which we call the body, sits a tenant who is wholly distinct from the body. This tenant thinks, wills, feels—lives a life separate from the senses—a life sacred and invisible. How shall this tenant communicate with the outer world? By speech: alphabets and words come to his help; the lip is taught their use, and then the sacred tenant within the body can utter itself to the world. So St. John conceives God as cut off from man by many barriers; "no man hath seen God at any time, nor can see him." How shall God communicate with the creature He has made? He does so by Christ who is His Word. Christ is the very mind of God translating itself into symbols which man can comprehend. As your word is yourself uttered, so Christ is God uttered. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."[2]

[1] W. Lock, *The Bible and Christian Life*, 25.
[2] W. J. Dawson, *The Reproach of Christ*, 23.

II.

The Nature of the Word.

1. In the Prologue to St. John's Gospel we have a principle by which we may harmonize the facts of Christ's life. St. John gives us a key which proves itself by fitting into all the wards of the lock. What Christ *did* and *said* becomes explicable only by knowing what Christ *is*.

2. The first sentence of the Gospel offers a perfect example of the stately symmetry by which the whole narrative is marked. The three clauses of which it consists are set side by side (. . . *and* . . . *and* . . .); the Subject (*the Word*) is three times repeated; and the substantive verb three times occupies the same relative position. The symmetry of form corresponds with the exhaustiveness of the thought. The three clauses contain all that it is possible for man to realize as to the essential nature of the Word in relation to time, and mode of being, and character: He was (1) *in the beginning*: He was (2) *with God*: He was (3) *God*. At the same time these three clauses answer to the three great moments of the Incarnation of the Word declared in verse 14. He who "was God," *became flesh*: He who "was with God," *tabernacled among us* (cf. 1 John i. 2): He who "was in the beginning," *became* (in time).[1]

3. The three propositions are brief, having a deeply marked character like oracles. The first indicates the *eternity* of the Logos; the second expresses profoundly the idea of His *personality*; the third His *divinity*.

i. His Eternity.

"In the beginning was the Word."

1. The phrase "in the beginning" carries us back to Gen. i. 1, which necessarily fixes the sense of the beginning. Here, as there, "the beginning" is the initial moment of time and creation; but with this difference, that Moses dwells on that which starts from the point, and traces the record of Divine action *from* the beginning (cf. 1 John i. 1, ii. 13), while St. John lifts our

[1] Westcott.

thoughts *beyond* the beginning and dwells on that which "was" when time, and with time finite being, began its course. Already when "God created the heaven and the earth," "the Word *was*." The "being" of the Word is thus necessarily carried beyond the limits of time, though the pre-existence of the Word is not definitely stated. The simple affirmation of existence in this connection suggests a loftier conception than that of pre-existence; which is embarrassed by the idea of time.

2. The Lord Himself had spoken of His life with the Father "before the world was" (xvii. 5, 24): so the Evangelist must trace it back as far as creation. But his actual phrase recalls the Jewish description of Wisdom created "in the beginning" (Prov. viii. 22); and the words are thrown in the forefront of the sentence that they may recall the opening words of the Book of Genesis: "*In the beginning* God made the heaven and the earth." The life which he is going to describe affects all creation.

3. The "beginning" described by St. John in the Prologue to his Gospel is manifestly the absolute beginning, the origination of all being or existence in the universe in which we find ourselves. It is a logical rather than a chronological conception; the "all things" included in it, in their successive "becomings," may have had no actual beginning at all in time; we cannot conceive of them as without beginning in thought, or without causal beginning. In whatever sense "being" is eternal, it is not without *principium*, without some "principle" of being. The "beginning" is causative and constitutive, and not merely initiative.

ii. His Personality.

"And the Word was with God."

1. The Word, already said to have been "in the beginning," is now stated to have been "with God." That is, not "with," in the sense of together with, or besides; but "with" in the sense of abiding with, as when we say, "I have it with me," or "He is abiding with us"—"with God," so as to be in that place (if we may so speak) where God especially was present; so as to be at home with Him and inseparable from Him. Our Evangelist elsewhere expresses this in other words: "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father": in His closest counsels,

delighting in Him, and in being the acting expression of His most holy will.

2. To this has ever been referred by the Church that sublime description in the Book of Proverbs, chap. viii., where Wisdom says, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth. Then I was by him as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men."

3. Clearly, no interpretation of these words fathoms their depth, or makes worthy sense, which does not recognize that the Word is a person. If there had been no distinct personality the Apostle might still have said, "The Word was God," but he could not have said, "The Word was *with* God." "The Word was God," says Dr. Owen, "in the unity of the Divine essence, and the Word was *with* God in the distinct personal subsistence." Jesus did not claim to be the Father, but He did claim to be one with the Father—"I and my Father are one" (John x. 30). We are encouraged to pray to the Father in the name of the Son (John xv. 16), but there could be no reason for this if there were no distinction of personality between the Father and the Son.

4. The expression, "The Word was with God," has been rendered, "The Word was *towards* God." This is a very suggestive rendering. It is significant of delight in God. The Being of the Son was attracted by the Being of the Father, as some flowers are attracted by the sun. Thus it is with those who are in Christ.

Sin separates men from God, but Christ brings them back to Him. In Christ they are reconciled to God (2 Cor. v. 18), and those who are reconciled enjoy the privilege of fellowship with God (1 John i. 3). The passage has also been rendered, "The Word was at home with God." "No restraint," says Jones, "no reserve, no shyness, but open, free, confidential fellowship for ever" (see Prov. viii. 22–31). How different it was with Adam when he sinned! He was afraid of the presence of God, and sought to get away from it (Gen. iii. 10).

¶ God could be known in nature, in conscience, in history; but if He was to be thoroughly known, He must be known in a *person*. So Christ stands the central fount of personality, who explains, not my gifts, my attainments, my knowledge, my capacities, but *me*, that which lies beyond these, uses them and gives them meaning and coherence.[1]

iii. His Divinity.

"And the Word was God."

1. The distinction of persons, so strongly emphasized by the second proposition, is in this third resolved into a community of essence: "And the Word was God." And this community of essence is not inconsistent with distinction of persons, but makes the communion of active Love possible; for none could, in the depths of eternity, dwell with and perfectly love and be loved by God, except one who Himself was God.

2. It is now apparent why St. John chooses this title to designate Christ in His pre-existent life. No other title brings out so clearly the identification of Christ with God, and the function of Christ to reveal God. It was a term which made the transition easy from Jewish Monotheism to Christian Trinitarianism. Being already used by the strictest Monotheists to denote a spiritual intermediary between God and the world, it is chosen by St .John as the appropriate title of Him through whom all revelation of God in the past had been mediated, and who has at length finished revelation in the person of Jesus Christ.

¶ The experience of David Nitschmann, the Moravian, is related in Wesley's *Journal*, as follows:—

I then fell into doubts of another kind. I believed in God;

[1] *The Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, ii. 212.

but not in Christ. I opened my heart to Martin Dober, who used many arguments with me, but in vain. For above four years I found no rest by reason of this unbelief; till one day, as I was sitting in my house, despairing of any relief, those words shot into me, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself." I thought, "Then God and Christ are one." Immediately my heart was filled with joy; and much more at the remembrance of these words which I now felt I *did believe*: "The Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."[1]

III.

The Worth of the Word.

The Apostle's words are practical. What practical use can we make of them? There are three ways in which they bring us strength.

1. The first way in which this passage helps us is that it *assures us that there is communication between God and His creatures in Christ.* We can choose between two theories of the universe and only two. The first is that it is all dumb, blind matter in a process of unconscious evolution. There is no God, for none is needed. All the morality that man has, he has created for himself in his own protection. It is vain to assault those far-reaching shining heavens with prayer—they are empty. Of this theory we are ready to say, with Wordsworth, better all the childish allegory of Greek mythology than this—

> Great God! I'd rather be
> A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
> So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
> Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

If that theory fails there is but one other, it is that God exists, that God has shrined Himself in man, and that God has some means of communicating with man. That is credible—for it explains the grandeur of human life. But if God really speaks with man, is it not just to suppose that it will be with unmistakable clearness and certainty? Will He not find means to

[1] *John Wesley's Journal* (Standard edition), ii. 38.

make us aware of what His mind is? And when we find in Jesus, not only thoughts so high and perfect that none else are comparable with them, but a life so lofty and sublime that even the most sceptical of men see in it something Divinely beautiful —may we not say, behold this is God's communication with us; this is His true Word; behold the very mind of the Highest is incarnated in Jesus Christ? "I can only comprehend God, as God is seen in Christ," was the confession of Dr. Arnold and Charles Kingsley. "The acknowledgment of God in Christ, accepted by thy reason, solves in thee all questions in the earth and out of it," said Browning; but if there had been no Christ, then the assurance that God had communicated His mind to us would be wholly vain.

¶ What has been the greatest dread of man since he entered on conscious intelligent life? It has been the dread of God's dumbness. The famous question put by Bonaparte to his atheistic Generals in Egypt, "Sirs, who made all that?" as he pointed to the starry splendour of the midnight sky over the Pyramids, has been a question always weighing heavily upon the heart of man. Man has never yet been wholly able to accommodate himself to a purely animal existence. He has gazed upon the solid universe with curious eyes, has felt the mystery of depth opening over depth in the blue abyss above and around him; has gone softly, haunted by the suspicion of a God hidden in stream and wood; has realized that life is an enigma for which there must needs be some answer. I look upon the ruined temples of Egypt, and inscriptions meet me eloquent of man's search for God; I enter the tombs of the old Etruscans, and over the funeral urn is the rising sun—mute witness to a hope which survives death. That strange altar to the unknown God, which St. Paul found at Athens, is discoverable in every land, among all peoples, through all time. "Sirs, who made all this?" man asks ever and again in painful astonishment. Can it be that the Maker is dumb? Can it be that He has created children whom He disowns? Is there no voice or language in all that starry immensity, all these vague, unending fields of splendour? That God should be dumb—that He should sit far from us, He who has made us, silent as a stone amid the rush of worlds—that is the most intolerable of thoughts, that is man's greatest dread, that is the terror which has cast its shadow on his heart from the beginning of the ages.[1]

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Reproach of Christ*, 25.

At length he came, of lowly birth, despised
And by the world rejected; but a band
Of humble men observed and felt the power
Of kindling love and faith with which he taught.
For in him thou, the eternal Word of truth,
Who once didst grave thy precepts upon stone,
Hadst become flesh; and they beheld with awe
God's glory in a human face expressed.
There justice sat revealed, and holiness,
And rapt devotion, as of one who felt
God's presence everywhere, within, around.
But all in one expression were combined,
A yearning love, which came in ceaseless stream
From heaven's exhaustless fount, and poured itself
Forth on the world, to heal and bless mankind.
There grace and truth shone star-like from the eye,
And trembled on the lips; and longing hearts,
Oppressed with sin, or hardened by the world,
Beheld and wept, and rested in that love.
And so his face in every line expressed
The Son of God, the eternal Thought for man;
And whosoe'er beheld the Son beheld
The Father who had sent him, and whose love
Had come in him to seek and save, and dwell
In manifested form in this sad world.[1]

(1) The Word of God is God's power, intelligence, and will in expression; not dormant and potential only, but in active exercise. God's Word is His will going forth with creative energy, and communicating life from God, the Source of life and being. "Without him was not any thing made that was made." He was prior to all created things and Himself "with God," and "God." He is God coming into relation with other things, revealing Himself, manifesting Himself, communicating Himself. The world is not itself God; things created are not God, but the intelligence and will which brought them into being, and which now sustain and regulate them, these are God. And between the works we see and the God who is past finding out there is the Word, One who from eternity has been with God, the medium of the first utterance of God's mind and the first forthputting of His power; as close to the inmost nature of God, and as truly

[1] James Drummond, *Johannine Thoughts*, 12.

uttering that nature, as our word is close to and utters our thought, *capable of being used by no one besides, but by ourselves only.*

Where the bud has never blown
Who for scent is debtor?
Where the spirit rests unknown
Fatal is the letter.

In Thee, Jesus, Godhead-stored,
All things we inherit,
For Thou art the very Word
And the very Spirit!

(2) Nature is never silent, but is always uttering her secrets. On the stillest night the heart would break, the mind would reel, for brain would be injured, if no sound were. In that comparative stillness which we miscall silence, we catch the sounds unheeded amid the noises of the busy day. We detect how multitudinous are the instruments which make up the quiet concert of the world, the music of the universe so harmoniously set that we perceive not its parts. Silent Nature would be Nature dead—nay, non-existent, which is an absurdity. Nature is ever revealing, giving expression to life; and is known only by that expression. And if it be so with Nature, because in Nature, we believe, God dwells, how much more clearly must it be so with God Himself? A God silent to the sorrows, the needs, the yearnings, the mere curiosity of men, would not be God. Man thinks of God simply by the fact that God has thought of him. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

¶ For us to hold this Catholic doctrine of Christ's Divinity is not merely to tax or strain our credence for the acceptance of a mystery as such, or of a belief bound up with primitive Christian traditions, as well as with ecclesiastical authority in councils or the like. It is to get hold of a final decisive assurance that the Infinite God does infinitely care for man. It is after we have recited, in our Eucharistic confession of faith, the epithets belonging to Jesus as a Son of God in the fullest sense, God begotten of God, and of one substance with the Father, that we are so well able to say with thankfulness, "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate." Look at Bethlehem in the light of this belief, and think what a God the

Father of Christ must be. The Holiest, the Mightiest, the Highest is for those who thus believe no longer a God far off. He has really come near to us, and continues to be near to us in the person of One who, being uncreate, is what no angel, not Michael himself, could be, the "adequate image" and "interpreter of the Father." The names of Jesus and Emmanuel might in other cases only record the fact that the Lord was willing to save His people, that God was and would be with them: in this one case, as belonging to a Divine Christ, they expand from affirmations of such grounds of confidence into titles by personal right His own.[1]

2. Next, this passage tells us that *the character of Christ is the character of God.* We cannot read the Gospels without a sense of the infinite piety, tenderness, holiness, and magnanimity of Jesus. Were the Gospels but a pure human idyll, still the picture they present of the character of Christ would be the loveliest known to man. The character of Christ is the character of God. He who told the stories of the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son, is God speaking out of the infinite tenderness of the Divine heart. He who healed the leper, blessed the Magdalene, forgave the thief, is God in His relation to human frailty, folly, and sin. The way in which Christ thought and acted is the precise measure of the way in which God thinks and acts. All theologies must come to that test.

¶ All that our faith in the Incarnation warrants us in asserting is, that in Jesus Christ we have "authentic tidings of invisible things,"—that in Him the Divine and human are so united and blent that we can draw certain and reliable conclusions as to the nature of God, so far as *that* nature can and need be known by us. Think what this means! Think what the difference is between saying, "Jesus is only a man seeking God,—adding one more to the many guesses as to the nature of God"; and saying, "In Jesus we see God seeking man, and seeking him out of pure love in order to save him"; "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"; "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." True: there *may*, there *must* be, mysteries in the Divine Nature far beyond what even the Incarnation can tell us. The Incarnation tells us all that we need to know. When we "have told its isles of light, and *fancied* all beyond," there must yet be heights and depths, in that High and Lofty

[1] W. Bright, *The Law of Faith*, 118.

One who inhabiteth eternity, which no fancy, however soaring, can penetrate.[1]

¶ If preachers still speak as though the Jehovah of a barbarous people were the true God whom Jesus called the Father in heaven, reject their message, for they know not what they say. If from this or that isolated saying of Christ or His Apostles visions of future torture have been evolved which revolt the human heart, and outrage its sense of pity, apply to them this simple test—Would Jesus have done this even to the most sinful of men? And if you know that Jesus would not have done it, you may be sure that God will not do it either. "I and my Father are One," said Christ; between God and Christ there is perfect moral accord, absolute spiritual identity. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God."[2]

¶ Henry Ward Beecher put before the Church the doctrine of the Deity of Jesus Christ which to me seems absolutely irrefutable. He did not merely gather texts strewn here and there over the Bible page, and piece them together and say, "This Book tells me that He was God, and I must believe it because the Book says it." No; he went back into his own experience, into the experience of the Christian Church. And what did he find? He found there, unmistakably, a great yearning after God, a yearning so deep and persistent that only one thing could be concluded—that God put it there, and put it there as a ground of expectation that He would answer the craving which He had created. And out of that came clearly and necessarily the conclusion that the God who made man thus to need and yearn after Himself must answer him, must come to him, or must cease to be God. Thus it was that, arguing from Christian experience, Beecher learned that it was reasonable and obligatory for the God who made man to come to him, and speak to him, and work for him, and die for him. Then bringing these observations and reasonings to the light of the Scriptural revelation, and looking at the historic Christ from the standpoint of human cravings and needs, Beecher could not escape the conclusion that the Christ portrayed in the Gospels was God's answer to man's necessity. And in grateful surprise he cried, "Why, this is God! There is not a single thing I would have in God but I find in Christ. There is not a single thing in Christ I would not like to have in God. Why, this is, this must be, God! I worship and I adore."[3]

[1] D. J. Vaughan, *The Present Trial of Faith*, 47.
[2] W. J. Dawson, *The Reproach of Christ*, 33.
[3] *Charles A. Berry*, 159.

In Christ I feel the heart of God
  Throbbing from heaven through earth;
Life stirs again within the clod,
  Renewed in beauteous birth;
The soul springs up, a flower of prayer,
Breathing His breath out on the air.

In Christ I touch the hand of God,
  From His pure height reached down,
By blessed ways before untrod,
  To lift us to our crown;
Victory that only perfect is
Through loving sacrifice, like His.

Holding His hand, my steadied feet
  May walk the air, the seas;
On life and death His smile falls sweet,
  Lights up all mysteries:
Stranger nor exile can I be
In new worlds where He leadeth me.

Not my Christ only; He is ours;
  Humanity's close bond;
Key to its vast, unopened powers,
  Dream of our dreams beyond.
What yet we shall be none can tell:
Now are we His, and all is well.[1]

3. Lastly, in this truth we have *the guarantee of authority and permanence in the Christian religion.* If religion is a need of the soul, and a primal fact in human life, we must have a centre of authority in religion which is immovable and immutable amid the impermanent elements of human thought. We demand that the truth which involves the most solemn of all issues shall be permanent; that its evolution shall be complete; that it shall be the sure word of prophecy, changeless and steadfast amid all the change of time and thought. And in Christ that Word is spoken. He speaks with authority, and not as the scribes. He is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." No man ever yet took the Word as his guide without finding in that Word a complete code of directions for life and death; and something more than a code of directions—an inner light by which the

[1] Lucy Larcom.

spirit lived and walked in the light, as God is in the light. He, who in sundry times and divers manners, spake to us by the Prophets, has at last spoken to us by His Son. God's last Word is Christ. Rest here: "He who hath known *me* hath known the Father also."

¶ If Jesus was not God, Christianity is not a religion, but a contribution to moral philosophy. It is in this latter way that it appeals to you. But mankind wants a religion: and it is as a religion that Christianity works in the world.[1]

(1) How impermanent human thought is, we all know. Men are continually shedding their beliefs and opinions as trees shed their bark, and snakes their skins, in the process of growth. In the rapid march of human knowledge mankind is like a great army which casts its baggage away that it may move unencumbered towards the battles of the future. No man thinks in mid-life what he thought in youth. The great teachers of the world themselves have no abiding word, and often their latest teaching is a direct recantation of their earliest. But we all feel that in a true Divine religion no such process of change could be tolerated. We cannot have one religion for youth and another for age; a truth that may be true to-day and false to-morrow; a voice that contradicts itself, a revelation that varies in its message with the varying tastes of men. No; we ask, and justly ask, for religion a changeless, abiding, authoritative voice that will speak through all our perplexities the sure Word by which the soul may live. Listen, then, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Here is the true authoritative voice.

Across the sea, along the shore,
In numbers more and ever more,
From lonely hut and busy town,
The valley through, the mountain down,
What was it ye went out to see,
Ye silly folk of Galilee?
The reed that in the wind doth shake?
The weed that washes in the lake?
The reeds that waver, the weeds that float?—
A young man preaching in a boat.

[1] *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, ii. 256.

What was it ye went out to hear,
By sea and land, from far and near?
A teacher? Rather seek the feet
Of those who sit in Moses' seat.
Go humbly seek, and bow to them,
Far off in great Jerusalem.
From them that in her courts ye saw,
Her perfect doctors of the law,
What is it ye came here to note?—
A young man preaching in a boat.

A prophet! Boys and women weak!
Declare, or cease to rave;
Whence is it he hath learned to speak?
Say, who his doctrine gave?

A prophet? Prophet wherefore he
Of all in Israel tribes?
He teacheth with authority,
And not as do the scribes.[1]

(2) This Word of God has indeed illumined and quickened all men and all races in their several degrees, Buddha and Confucius and Zoroaster, Zeno and Pythagoras, Indians and Persians, Babylonians and Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. He has been present in universal history, as He has been present in every individual soul of man. But nevertheless He has specially visited one family, one race. There was a prerogative tribe selected in due time from the rest, a first-fruits of the nations of the earth, a peculiar people consecrated to God. Though there be many tributaries, the main stream of religious history runs in this channel. To this nation the Word of God came as to His own inheritance, spake as to His own household—spake by lawgivers and prophets, by priests and kings, spake in divers stages and divers manners, spake with an intensity and a power and a directness, with a continuity and a fulness, with which He spake to no other nation besides. In neither case was the response equal to the appeal. Among the nations at large "the light" shone "in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not": to the descendants of Abraham "he came as to his own" vineyard; yet "his own received him not." Nevertheless among both

[1] Clough, *Poems*, 46.

—among the nations whom He approached through the avenues of the natural conscience, and among the Israelites to whom He spoke in the piercing tones of inspiration, there were those who did feel His presence, did hear His voice; and these were rescued from their grovelling, material, earthly life, were born anew in Him, were made sons of God through God the Word.

There is no broken reed so poor and base,
No rush, the bending tilt of swamp-fly blue,
But He therewith the ravening wolf can chase,
And guide His flock to springs and pastures new;
Through ways unlooked for, and through many lands,
Far from the rich folds built with human hands,
The gracious footprints of His love I trace.[1]

(3) We have no need to question any value that can be claimed for writings held as sacred by others outside the Christian world. All truth is of God, and is profitable according to its degree, and its adaptedness to the genius and growth of the people who receive it. To judge and condemn other scriptures, such as the Koran, as wholly worthless and evil, is measurably to judge and condemn Him, by whose Providence the book and its religion exists, until its believers are prepared for clearer and fuller light. Yet in every such revelation, professing to come directly from heaven, even the human element is relatively most imperfect, and comparatively powerless. Such scriptures appeal authoritatively only to the devotional or emotional element in man; never to his intellect and heart. They demand reception under pain of condemnation, independent of rational perception of their truth; and they promise, as a reward of faith, a sensuous paradise to the faithful. In their words is no potency of progress beyond a certain point. On the other hand, in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures there is a clear revelation of human development, through the growth of the spiritual or Christ nature in man throughout the ages.

¶ No two ideals could be more opposite than a Christian saint in a Gothic cathedral and a Buddhist saint in a Chinese temple. The opposition exists at every point; but perhaps the

[1] Lowell, *Poems*, 112.

shortest statement of it is that the Buddhist saint always has his eyes shut, while the Christian saint always has them very wide open. The Buddhist saint always has a very sleek and harmonious body, but his eyes are heavy and sealed with sleep. The medieval saint's body is wasted to its crazy bones, but his eyes are frightfully alive. There cannot be any real community of spirit between forces that produced symbols so different as that. Granted that both images are extravagances, are perversions of the pure creed, it must be a real divergence which could produce such opposite extravagances. The Buddhist is looking with peculiar intentness inwards. The Christian is staring with a frantic intentness outwards.[1]

¶ In these days of the religion of this and that,—briefly let us say, the religion of Stocks and Posts—in order to say a clear word of the Campo Santo, one must first say a firm word concerning Christianity itself. I find numbers, even of the most intelligent and amiable people, not knowing what the word means; because they are always asking how much is true, and how much they like, and never ask, first, what *was* the total meaning of it, whether they like it or not.

The total meaning was, and is, that the God who made earth and its creatures, took at a certain time upon the earth, the flesh and form of man; in that flesh sustained the pain and died the death of the creature He had made; rose again after death into glorious human life, and when the date of the human race is ended, will return in visible human form, and render to every man according to his work. Christianity is the belief in, and love of, God thus manifested. Anything less than this, the mere acceptance of the sayings of Christ, or assertion of any less than Divine power in His Being, may be, for aught I know, enough for virtue, peace, and safety; but they do not make people Christians, or enable them to understand the heart of the simplest believer in the old doctrine. Two verses of George Herbert will put the height of that doctrine into less debateable, though figurative, picture than any longer talk of mine—

Hast thou not heard that my Lord Jesus died?
Then let me tell thee a strange story.
The God of Power, as he did ride
In his majestic robes of glory,
Resolved to light; and so, one day
He did descend, undressing all the way.

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*.

The stars his tire of light, and rings, obtained,
The cloud his bow, the fire his spear,
The heavens his azure mantle gained,
And when they asked what he would wear,
He smiled, and said as he did go,
"He had new clothes a-making, here, below."

I write from memory; the lines have been my lesson, ever since 1845, of the *noblesse* of thought which makes the simplest word best.[1]

[1] Ruskin, *Præterita*, ii. 208.

The Incarnation of the Word.

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The Incarnation of the Word.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. —John i. 14.

1. "The Word." Thrice elsewhere (John i. 1; 1 John i. 1; Rev. xix. 13) is this term used to designate the same Person. It is used in the first verse of this Gospel without apology, and without definition, as if the readers were acquainted with it, as indeed they were, for it had a large circulation among both Greek and Jewish thinkers. It is one of the most pregnant words used in the New Testament. In verse 18 we are told why the term is so used—"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." As thus used the term is one of great significance. By our words we make our wills known to others. By our words we issue our prohibitions or commands, and give effect to our intentions. Our words, then, give expression to our will. And, similarly, the Word of God is God's will expressing itself. It is the God of Heaven coming into relation with created things and revealing Himself.

2. Who is this Word? He is one who existed in the beginning, and is in perfect union with God, being the expression of God's thought and purpose and energy. He is Himself the Creator of all things, of bird and flower, of mountain and sea, of sun and star. He is the Creator of man; and all the light of truth and goodness that has ever arisen in man's heart came only from Him. Who, then, is this mysterious Person, this Eternal Word of God? We must turn to this fourteenth verse. "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace

and truth." The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us! This august and mysterious Word of God, Himself became a man. Then we know who He is. He must be Jesus, that Jesus of Nazareth who was born in Bethlehem.

3. Far away down the years, at the close of the first century, an old man sits brooding over the things that he had seen and heard in the cities of Judah and in the fields of Galilee. Forty, fifty, sixty years, and more perhaps, now lie between him and the scenes which he records. Sixty years—and such years!—years of revolution—years of judgment—years in which the old order perished in doom, and the New World rose into victory under the breath of the Spirit of God. He had himself, long ago, it may be, laid up in the Book of the Revelation the visions in which the tremendous drama of those momentous years moved towards its final and critical act. Yet, now, his look is not forward into the silences that delay the trumpet-blasts of Divine action. His eyes turn ever back, overleaping the crowded interval; back to those wonderful days when he walked behind the feet of the Master—the days when he saw, and heard, and handled. Still his whole being hangs upon those sealed memories. Still he ponders, and weighs, and wonders, and broods. For we are listening, in these first verses of St. John, to an old man's broodings. No one can mistake their tone, or be insensible to their atmosphere, as the verses fall on the ear with their solemn weight of measured monotony, serious as a winter's eve, in which the stars silently offer themselves to our eyes, one by one, in seemly order and in noiseless ease. So the great words detach themselves from his lips, single, slow, deliberate, unhasting. Round and round the story his spirit has searched and laboured, and waited, until word could set itself to word, and phrase to phrase. No time could be too long in which to collect into one brief passage the sum and substance of all that revelation which was made known to him in the Name of Jesus Christ.[1]

¶ The belief in the Divinity of Christ is waning among us. They who hold it have petrified it into a theological dogma without life or warmth, and thoughtful men are more and more beginning to put it aside. How are we then to get back this belief in the Son of God—by authority or by the old way of persecution?

[1] H. Scott Holland, *Creed and Character*, 3.

The time for these has passed. The other way is to begin at the beginning. Begin as the Bible begins, with Christ the Son of Man. Begin with Him as God's character revealed under the limitations of humanity. Lay the foundations of a higher faith deeply in a belief of His Humanity. See Him as He was. Breathe His spirit. After that, try to comprehend His Life. Enter into His Childhood. Feel with Him when He looked round about Him in anger, when He vindicated the crushed woman from the powerless venom of her ferocious accusers;—when He stood alone in the solitary Majesty of Truth in Pilate's judgment-hall; when the light of the Roman soldiers' torches flashed on Kedron in the dark night, and He knew that watching was too late; when His heart-strings gave way upon the Cross. Walk with Him through the Marriage Feast. See how the sick and weary came to Him instinctively; how men, when they saw Him, felt their sin, they knew not why, and fell at His feet; how guilt unconsciously revealed itself, and all that was good in men was drawn out, and they became higher than themselves in His presence. Realize this. Live with Him till He becomes a living thought—ever present—and you will find a reverence growing up which compares with nothing else in human feeling. You will feel that a slighting word spoken of Him wounds with a dart more sharp than personal insult. You will feel that to bow at the name of Jesus is no form at will of others, but a relief and welcome. And if it should ever chance that, finding yourself thrown upon your own self, and cut off from sects—suspected, in quest of a truth which no man gives,—then that wondrous sense of strength and friendship comes, the being alone with Christ, with the strength of a manlier independence. Slowly then, this almost insensibly merges into adoration. For what is it to adore Christ? To call Him God; to say Lord, Lord? No. Adoration is the mightiest love the soul can give—call it by what name you will.[1]

4. The one supremely significant fact in the universe is, to quote Dr. Peabody's fine paraphrase, "the transformation of language into life." We see this transformation in three different moments. There was the creation at the beginning, when great vitalizing words of God took form in created beings. Again there is the same transformation in all human work and morality to the end, when man is hearing words of God within him and is transforming them into deeds and finished products. But

[1] F. W. Robertson, in *Life and Letters*, 417.

between these two there stands the stupendous fact of Christ, interpreting the first and inspiring the second.

(1) *Creation.*—It is matter of general consent that the universe as we know it had a beginning. As thought travels backward into the great silence before that beginning, it must needs discover a moment when the eternal thought found expression, and the universe began. The word became flesh. God spoke, and the thing spoken stood out as a created fact. "The universe is God's language." The unspoken word is all that might be; the spoken word is all that is. This is the meaning of those wonderful stories of Genesis, in which we see all things coming forth in their mighty evolution in answer to the words of God.

That is the Christian view of nature and the universe. It is not an eternally grinding machine, nor is it a dream-picture woven of mist. It is a real universe, in which God's language is transformed into life. The great words were spoken, and there are the mountains and the fields and the seas, and the ships upon the seas and the cities of men. It makes all the difference in the world whether as we stand in the midst of all these things we hear only a jangle of meaningless sounds, or whether we hear the word of the Lord. Listen to that word in the summer fields and sunshine, in the winter storms and the voice of the tossing seas. Listen, too, in the crowded streets, the throb of machinery and traffic, the bustle and the gentle speech of homes. In new thought and adventurous policy, in great loyalties to ancient institutions; in the voices of teachers in schools, of preachers in pulpits, of business men in offices, of shopkeepers in shops; in the heart-beatings of the lonely and the sobs of the penitent—everywhere creation is the word become flesh.

(2) *Jesus Christ.*—The word had been spoken in an unknown tongue. We heard it, and saw its incarnate forms, but we did not understand. Science was patiently deciphering it, retranslating it back from life to language; endeavouring from the manifest facts of the universe to spell out the meaning of the Word of God. But science finds it difficult, and conscience and love find it far more difficult to understand. The Divine Word has seemed to change and suffer in the process of becoming flesh. Its meaning is obscure, and it seems to have been mingled with much other speech that is not Divine.

Many had tried to interpret it into human speech. Psalmists, prophets, philosophers had tried; but their words died away, leaving fainter and fainter echoes in man's conscience. They had written their interpretation, but God's word can never find full expression in a book. Language must be transformed into life—and not, this time, the general life of the universe, but our human life—that we may understand. So "the Word became flesh." The meaning of life, the purpose of God in creation, became intelligible in Jesus Christ. His whole speech and conduct and being interpreted the world. When men saw Him they said, Life ought to be like that: God is like that.

Take three of the words of God, and let us see their transformation into life in Christ:—

(*a*) *Holiness.*—The word was familiar, for there was abundance of ethical speculation and of conscience too. But holiness was dead and buried in formal rules of conduct, paralysed by man's universal failure, and hopelessly unattainable. But here was holiness splendidly alive, spontaneous, free, and natural. Here it was not merely attainable but actually attained. Jesus Christ—*that* was what God had meant by conscience, what conscience had tried to say; *that* was what ethical science had seen afar off, but never reached.

(*b*) *Love*—the most fascinating and yet the most elusive word of God. Men heard it in their own hearts and homes, but it was uncertain or sinister, and always precarious, being threatened both by life and by death. That was human love, and the Divine love was but a remote and dim whisper of possible goodwill, if things turned out to be as one sometimes almost dared to hope. But here was love at once stronger than death and simple as the laughter of a child. Men saw its patience, its responsiveness, its facility. They felt its tenderness, its understanding, its healing power. Here is God's heart, seen in the heart of a man. Here is what all true love actually means. The word Love had become flesh.

(*c*) *Death*—that last sad word. Every death before had been recognized as a Word of God, but how unfriendly and how harsh! Since Jesus died, men have known what God means by His great word Death, for the death of Jesus has interpreted the whole of life. In the light of its love and sacrifice we look with new eyes

upon sin, despair, forgiveness, restoration. And that death has reinterpreted death itself, giving to it surprisingly rich and blessed meaning. All the wonder of the eternal life—its rest, its renewal, its reward, its higher service—all these were included in the meaning of the word death, when in Christ language was translated into life. Truly man may say to the spectre, at the grave of Jesus—

> Thou hast stolen a jewel, Death,
> Shall light thy dark up like a star.

All this, and far more than this, is included in the meaning of "the word became flesh." Flesh, the tempted and tempting thing, weak and suffering, subject to all contingencies and liable to all risks—flesh was used to express adequately and for ever the meaning of God's word of creation.

(3) The third stage of this incarnation has yet to be considered. The text is a command that the word shall become flesh again in every Christian life. The translation of language into life is the great act of religion.

We are familiar with the idea of the incarnation being perpetuated in the Bible, the Church, and the Sacraments. But besides these, each life around us is a Word of God, a special purpose and design realized in flesh in its degree. This thought surely gives new meaning to our intercourse with those who do business with us or live beside us. "There is but one temple in the world," says Novalis, "and that temple is the Body of Man. . . . We touch heaven when we lay our hands on a human body." Another has said: "The body of a child is as the body of the Lord; I am not worthy of either." How reverently, gently, purely, should we treat one another if this is indeed so.

But most especially in ourselves must language be transformed into life. We all hear many words of God. The worship of the Church, its songs and prayers, its readings and thoughts, and the inward response to these is desire, aspiration, and resolve; these words are to become flesh in us when we return from our worship to our daily life. And also there are other words which our spirits hear from day to day. What has life been saying to you? What has your experience meant? What lessons has God been trying to make you understand? Some of it we cannot under-

stand, and all that is required of us is that we shall walk among these unknown voices of life, erect and brave and self-respecting and gentle. But there is much that we understand quite well. It is the Word of God, spoken clearly and in familiar language by the voice of life.

But that Word has yet to become flesh. There are countless words of God in the knowledge and conviction of us all which are as yet no more than words. These are waiting for their incarnation in our character and influence, in our daily work and service of man and God. The works of our hands are God's word fulfilled in us. We who can work are born that certain great words we have heard in our secret souls may become flesh in deeds. Rise then and do the work that thy hands find to do. In this living fashion speak out what is in thee. So shalt thou also be a Word of God incarnate, an expression of His mind in living flesh.[1]

¶ The Incarnation of God in the terms of the Christ is not finished yet. Still as "the Christ within" He has to be born again in the hearts of men, and not only yesterday, but to-day and for ever, has Jesus to be received by His own. If the redemption of the world is to be wrought out and completed, that spirit which dwelt in Jesus, that grace and truth, that complete merging of the individual will in the Divine, that passionate love of men, that reverence for all things as belonging to the Father, that consciousness of unity with Him—all these have to become our common inheritance and possession. The Christian is not called upon to go out of his ordinary world to find his God, but by his very loyalty to Christ he must look first of all for his God in terms of the human life he knows so well. Having once God in Christ he must go on to look for and to find "the Christ as every man." The Incarnation must not be for him historical, a past phenomenon merely, but a continually recurring process and experience. The Christ who was born once in Jewry has to be born again in the hearts of all who would attain their true manhood. Not in nothingness and non-entity, then, but in living, breathing, feeling power does the God who is Spirit still reveal Himself and carry forward His purpose. To every generation He manifests Himself afresh, Love making for itself new channels to meet the new needs. Still the God of Love clothes Himself in the garment of form, and still He becomes flesh and dwells among men.[2]

[1] J. Kelman.

[2] M. C. Albright, *The Common Heritage*, 144.

Lo! this one preached with fervent tongue;
The world went forth to hear;
Upon his burning words they hung,
Intent, with ravished ear.

Like other lives the life he led,
Men spake no word of blame;
And yet, unblest, unprofited,
The world went on the same.

Another came, and lived, and wrought,
His heart all drawn above;
By deeds, and not by words, he taught
Self-sacrificing love.

No eager crowds his preaching drew;
Yet one by one they came;
The secret of his power they knew,
And caught the sacred flame.

And all around, as morning light
Steals on with silent wing,
The world became more pure and bright
And life a holier thing.

Ah! Pastor, is thy heart full sore
At all this sin and strife?
Feed with the Word, but ah! far more
Feed with a holy life.[1]

5. There is a difficulty in the construction of this passage, which our English Versions endeavour to clear up by putting the middle portion of the verse in a parenthesis. Some of the best commentators give their sanction to the course which our translators have adopted; and we may therefore, perhaps, safely regard the Evangelist as in the text announcing the doctrine that "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth," and throwing in at the same time the parenthetical remark, "We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father."

Thus we have—

I. The Divine Life entering upon a Human Life.

"And the Word became flesh."

[1] W. Walsham How.

II. The Character of the Human Life.

"And dwelt among us—full of grace and truth."

III. The Divine discovered in the Human.

"And we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father."

I.

The Divine entering the Human.

"And the Word became flesh."

This is called the Incarnation. What does the word "Incarnation" mean? We know that carnal means fleshly, and carnivorous means flesh-eating, and carnation means a flesh-coloured flower. Incarnate, then, means to clothe in flesh; and the Incarnation is the "becoming clothed in flesh," or the "assumption of flesh." So that when we speak of the Incarnation we are using an abbreviated phrase; it must mean the Incarnation of something; and when it stands in this way, alone with the definite article, it refers to the Incarnation of the Son of God. The subject before us, then, is the clothing of the Son of God in flesh, or the Son of God assuming human nature.

Two things therefore have to be understood: First, that before assuming human nature He previously existed as Son of God; Second, that when He assumed human nature He really and truly became a man. When these two things are understood we must consider *why* the Son of God became Son of man.

i. His Pre-existence.

1. Who is it of whom St. John says that He became flesh? The Word, he says. And who was the Word? Was it some prophet, a voice from God, bringing His word to man? It was more than that. Was it some Being, more than man, created on purpose to be the messenger of God to His creatures, and to declare His will with more authority than any human being could declare it? If we believe anything at all about Him, it was more than that. Was it some great angel, a dweller in the secret place where thought of man never approaches, seated near God's

throne, ever beholding the face of God?—was it such a one, who was sent to clothe himself with man's form and flesh? Was it Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God? Was it Michael, the Prince of Angels? Was it one of the Seraphim, who day and night cry aloud, "Holy, holy, holy"? It was more than that—more, infinitely more than that—one to whom highest angels were but messengers and servants. Was it some heavenly Person, greater, higher, more ancient than the archangels, created *almost* from all eternity, to be the companion of the solitude of the Godhead on the eternal throne, to be His minister in all creation, the revealer and utterer of the mind of God, the sharer with Him in the worship of heaven and earth—all but God? Again, if we hold the faith of St. Paul and St. James, if we believe Him of whom we are speaking, it was more than this. The gulf is infinite, the gulf is impassable, between such a supposed being and the reality declared in Scripture—between God and the highest of His creatures. Who was the Word? St. John tells us, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." "The Word was God." This is He of whom it is said, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." This is that Jesus Christ, of whom it is written, that "She brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." The Son of God, only begotten, equal to the Father, ever with the Father, by whom also He made the worlds; "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God"; "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power." "The firstborn of every creature, *for* by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist";—not to be named with the angels, for the angels were made by Him, and Him do the angels worship—"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Only

He knew the secret of God, for He was one with God. Only He had seen God, for He was the Son of God, "in glory with God before the world was." "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son (himself God), which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." And from the "glory" and "bosom" of the Father He came, to be a little child, born in Bethlehem of Judæa, the city of David; and He who came, was God.

¶ Such a relation as we believe our Saviour now bears to the Father could not have arisen at a point of time. It could not have been created by His earthly life. The power to exercise God's prerogative of forgiveness, judgment, and redemption could never have been acquired by the moral excellence or religious achievement of any created being, however endowed by the Spirit of God. I confess (if I may descend so far) I had long this difficulty, which lowered the roof of my faith, and arrested the flight of devotion. And I am afraid, from the state of our public worship, I was not alone in that difficulty. I could not get the plenitude of New Testament worship or Catholic faith out of the mere self-sacrifice of the human Christ even unto death. Nor could I rise to it from that level. I was too little moved by His earthly renunciations to rise to the dimensions of the Church's faith, for I am not speaking of its creed, which was my own. The cross of such a Christ, who was the mere martyr of His revelation, or the paragon of self-sacrifice, was not adequate to produce the absolute devotion which made a proud Pharisee, yea a proud Apostle, glory in being Christ's entire slave, and which drove the whole Church to call Christ Lord and God, in a devotion the most magnificent the soul has ever known. Such worship seemed too large a response to anything which Jesus, with all His unique greatness, did or determined in the course of His earthly life alone. The Synoptic record alone would not account for the Christian religion, nor produce the plerophory of Christian faith. Christ's earthly humiliation had to have its foundation laid in Heaven, and to be viewed but as the working out of a renunciation before the world was.[1]

¶ Among geographers there have sometimes been disputes as to the identity of a river. They have debated, for instance, whether the Quorra were the same as the Niger; but when a boat, launched on the Niger, after a few weeks made its appearance floating on the Quorra, there was an end of the argument:

[1] P. T. Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, 269.

the names might be two, but the streams were demonstrably the one the continuation of the other. And sometimes a critic, indignant at an anonymous author, has shown how much better a well-known writer would have handled the self-same subject—when it turns out that the nameless and the well-known personages are in this instance identical. In the 102nd Psalm, eternity and unchangeableness are ascribed to the Great Creator; and there is no opponent of the Saviour's divinity who would not sing that psalm as a fitting ascription to the Most High God: when behold! the Epistle to the Hebrews informs us that it is a hymn of praise to Jesus Christ![1]

2. The doctrine of the Incarnation involves the pre-existence of Christ, not in an ideal, mystic sense, but as a personal Being. The preposition "with" in the second clause of verse 1—"the Word was with God"—is one which implies mutual association in a striking way. It suggests the intercourse of those who are standing face to face—"The Word was directed to God, moving toward God." The same idea appears in a more tender form in verse 18—"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Christ asserts His personal pre-existence in the majestic words of John viii. 58: "Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM." It is implied in the saying so frequently upon His lips about His coming into the world, coming with a purpose which it was His constant effort to fulfil. It has its loftiest expression in His solemn words of prayer, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

¶ In ordinary biographies, a birth is the beginning. It was in the year 1483 that the mind to which we owe the Reformation commenced its existence; for it was then that Martin Luther was born. It was in London that the career began to which England is indebted for its great epic poem, and that other from which science received its mightiest modern impulse; for it was there that Milton and Bacon first saw the light of life. Having

[1] James Hamilton, *Works*, iii. 257.

told us this, the biographer feels that he has begun at the beginning; and with this statement coincides the consciousness of the individual himself. For, whatever the old philosophy may have dreamed about the pre-existence of spirit and the transmigration of souls, no man could ever seriously say that he had led another life before he was born; no man could ever tell incidents and experiences which had occurred to him in a state of existence anterior to the present. With us, to all intents, our birth is our beginning. In the whole history of our species there has been only one exception.[1]

3. The Apostle Paul draws practical appeals from the same truth. When he would urge the Corinthians to "prove the sincerity of their love," he gives them this touching reminder—"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." The sacrifice which ended in the Cross began when Jesus left "the bosom of the Father." "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, counted not the being equal with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, then he humbled himself, becoming obedient as far as unto death, even the death of the cross."

¶ The doctrine of the pre-existence of Jesus is not confined to St. John. Writing to the Corinthian Church St. Paul reminds them in one passage of the history of Israel of old, and then he adds the remarkable words, "They drank of a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ"—that is, Christ was with God's ancient people in their wanderings in the wilderness some fourteen or fifteen hundred years before He was born (1 Cor. x. 4). So, too, in the great passage on the resurrection of the dead in the same Epistle, he says, "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven" (1 Cor. xv. 47); and in the Second Epistle to the same Church at Corinth he reminds them of "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich"—words which have no possible meaning unless Jesus had lived a heavenly life before His incarnation. Perhaps the strongest assertion of the pre-incarnate Being of Christ in all the writings of St. Paul is the following passage

[1] James Hamilton, *Works*, iii. 249.

in the Epistle to the Philippians (ii. 6, 7): "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross."

So, too, St. Peter declares that long before Jesus came into the world, the Spirit of Jesus was moving and working in the prophets of the Hebrew people: "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them" (1 Pet. i. 10, 11).[1]

ii. His Humanity.

1. Very early in the history of the Christian Church, and even before all the original Apostles had passed away, there were persons who had received Christian baptism and professed to be Christians to whom it seemed incredible that our Lord was really man—that according to the vigorous statement of St. John in the text, He "became flesh." The form in which St. John affirms the truth was, no doubt, suggested by the heresies which denied it. There was a very common belief in the ancient world that human sin has its origin and roots in the flesh and blood of the body, and that all matter is necessarily evil; to disengage and separate the higher and spiritual life of man from his physical nature was therefore supposed to be the true discipline of moral and spiritual perfection. There were teachers in the Church, claiming to speak in the power of the Spirit of God, who taught this doctrine, and to whom it was inconceivable that our Lord could have had a body like our own. St. John was thinking of these teachers when he said in his Epistle, "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus is not of God: and this is the spirit of the antichrist."

¶ Earnest belief in Christ's divinity has a difficulty in allowing His real humanity. The idea, for example, of Christ's growing, as a man, in wisdom as well as in stature, is repugnant to some minds; and, despite the teaching of Scripture, there are

[1] G. S. Barrett, *The Earliest Christian Hymn*, 32.

those who refuse to think of His being subject to any ordinary human limitations, whether of power or of knowledge. This idea of Christ, too common among believers in His divinity, finds expression in Shelley's fine but misleading figure—

A mortal shape to him
Was like the vapour dim,
Which the orient planet animates with light.

The same poet makes Him tread the thorns of death and shame, like a triumphal path, of which He never truly felt the sharpness. One of our hymns falls into this heresy when it speaks of the "seeming infant of a day." This is exactly to reduce His humanity to a mere appearance. He was not the "seeming infant," but the real "infant of a day." I have myself met people to whom Christ's patience and suffering, for example, could offer no consolation, because they said, "He was God all the time, and it was easy for Him."[1]

¶ "I believe," cries Irving with the deepest emotion, "that my Lord did come down and toil, and sweat, and travail, in exceeding great sorrow, in this mass of temptation, with which I and every sinful man am oppressed; did bring His Divine presence into death-possessed humanity, into the one substance of manhood created in Adam, and by the Fall brought into a state of resistance and alienation from God, of condemnation and proclivity to evil, of subjection to the devil; and bearing it all upon His shoulders in that very state into which God put it after Adam had sinned, did suffer its sorrows and pains, and swimming anguish, its darkness, wasteness, disconsolateness, and hiddenness from the countenance of God; and by His faith and patience did win for Himself the name of the Man of Sorrows and the author and finisher of our faith."

This was the very essence of his belief. And when from unexpected quarters, everywhere round him, he discovered that other men, that his fathers and brethren in his own Church, disowned this central truth which gave life and reality to the gospel, it went to his heart like a personal affliction. It was not that they differed with him on a controverted subject; the matter was different to his grieved and wondering perception. To him it appeared that they denied the Lord. The deepest heart of Divine grace and pity, the real unspeakable redemption, seemed to Irving overlooked and despised when this wonderful identity of nature was disputed. He stood wondering and sorrowful, always in the

[1] A. Halliday Douglas.

midst of his argument turning back again to simple statement, as if, like his Lord, he would have asked, "Do ye *now* believe?"[1]

2. The faith of the Church in our Lord's humanity rests primarily on experience—the experience of those who knew Him during His earthly life. And their experience must also determine our whole conception of the Incarnation. Our theory must be governed by the facts; we shall go far astray if we attempt first to construct a theory and then to force the facts into agreement with it. What, then, are the facts?

Mary, His mother, was the friend of the original apostles and disciples of our Lord, and after His crucifixion, she lived with the Apostle John. She would tell our Lord's friends how He grew from infancy to childhood, and childhood to youth, increasing in wisdom as well as in height and strength with His increasing years,—a child and a youth to attract the favour of both God and man. Nor was it Mary alone who could tell them of our Lord's childhood, youth, and manhood. James and Jude, to whom two Epistles, bearing their names, are attributed in the New Testament, but who do not appear to have become His disciples till after His resurrection, were His "brothers." Salome, the wife of Zebedee, was, in all probability, the sister of Mary His mother, and was therefore His aunt. Her sons, the two Apostles James and John, were His cousins; and it was this relationship, as well as the special confidence with which our Lord had treated them, that, perhaps, suggested the request that they might sit, one on His right hand and one on His left hand, in His Kingdom. All these relatives of His, who were well known to the first generation of Christians, could recall our Lord's life in Nazareth before His public ministry began; and it is certain that they never doubted that He was really man. Nor were there any signs during His public ministry that our Lord had lost any of the characteristics of humanity or had been liberated from any of its limitations.

¶ Man has always found it easier to see a Divine element in the strange and awful and supernatural, and to picture his Deity as living above him in the high mountains, or the unknown depth of sky, than to find Him in the near and the accustomed. Now in the fulness of time he has been called upon to see Him in the "Word made flesh," dwelling among men "in fashion as a man,"

[1] Mrs. Oliphant, *Life of Edward Irving*, ii. 109.

not taking upon Him the nature of angels, but the nature of suffering humanity. The Greeks might indeed conceive of their gods, their Apollo or Athena, taking some part in the affairs of men, and jealously watching the interests of their worshippers; the Egyptian might picture Horus or Osiris, experiencing like men the triumph of victory or the ignominy of defeat; but the Christian has a more difficult, but a far more glorious, conception to which he may rise. He may see his God as manifested in terms of his own life, becoming his Comrade in temptation, and his Example in humility. Here is one who undertook, not to govern the world from afar, but to overcome it from within, who calls Himself not high and lifted up, but meek and lowly, the servant of all. As a shepherd He goes before His sheep to make the crooked paths straight, and the rough places smooth, and in His own experience He conquers death and triumphs over the grave.[1]

¶ In deep spiritual temptations nothing has helped me better, with nothing have I heartened myself and driven away the devil better, than with this, that Christ, the true Eternal Son of God, is "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh"; and that He sits on the right hand of God, and pleads for us. When I can grasp this shield of faith, I have already chased away the evil one with his fiery darts.[2]

3. Why do we insist upon the humanity of Christ?

(1) First, there is the sense of our loss should the doctrine be obscured. Such comfortable words as these—"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him": "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"—would lose their meaning.

(2) And, secondly, we should fall back into the old error about the character of God. It was because men thought it degrading to the Son of God to have become flesh that they denied it. St. John knew that humiliation is not degradation; pride degrades. The imperfect soars or stands aloof. "The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords," can only reveal Himself by stooping. We shall never know by our experience the glory and the bliss of immeasurable con-

[1] M. C. Albright, *The Common Heritage*, 113. [2] Luther.

descension, for He came to lift us into participation with Himself. But we can adore the man Christ Jesus, and the Father whom He reveals, as we could not have adored a God shrouded from us in His own perfections.

> Save through the flesh Thou wouldst not come to me—
> The flesh, wherein Thy strength my weakness found,
> A weight to bow Thy Godhead to the ground,
> And lift to heaven a lost humanity.[1]

4. Christ was not only truly man, with body, soul, and spirit, in each of which He suffered, by hunger and weariness and pain, by grief and anger, by desolation: He also was and is perfectly man, and He was and is representatively man.

(1) *Christ was and is perfectly man.*—For us humanity is broken up into fragments by sex, by race, by time, by circumstance. From the beginning its endowments were not unequally divided between man and woman, whose differences are essential to the true idea of the whole. And we can see that countless nations and ages have not yet exhausted the manifold capacities of manhood and womanhood under the varied disciplines and inspirations of life. Again and again even in our own experience some new flash of courage or wisdom or patience or tenderness goes to brighten the picture of man's completed and real self. But in Christ there are no broken or imperfect lights. In Him everything which is shown to us of right and good and lovely in the history of the whole world is gathered up once for all. Nothing limits His humanity, but the limits proper to humanity itself. Whatever there is in man of strength, of justice, of wisdom: whatever there is in woman of sensibility, of purity, of insight, is in Christ without the conditions which hinder among us the development of contrasted virtues in one person. Christ belongs peculiarly to no one people, to no one time. And conversely, if there be aught that is noble in the achievements or in the aspirations of any people or of any time, it finds a place in His sympathy, and strength from His example.

(2) *Christ was and is also representatively man.*—Seeing that He unites in Himself all that is truly manly and truly womanly, stripped of the accidental forms which belong to some one country,

[1] John Bannister Tabb.

or to some one period, every one therefore can find in Him for his own work union with the eternal. He is, in the language of St. Paul, "the last Adam," "a life-giving spirit." For Him, consciously or unconsciously, all men were looking: to Him all history tended: in Him a higher life had its beginning and its pledge. "Ye shall see," He said Himself in answer to the first confession of faith, "the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." And for us the promise has found accomplishment. In Him we are enabled to perceive that the broken unity of earth and heaven has been restored; in Him we are enabled to recognize that the earlier intercourse between the seen and the unseen worlds has been brought to an absolute fulfilment. Christ *the Son of man* has bestowed on all men the gifts which belonged to Him as *the Son of God.*

iii. Why did He become flesh?

The purpose of the Incarnation has been abundantly discussed in the history of Christendom, from the Alexandrine Fathers onward. Anselm, in his "Cur Deus Homo," asks and answers the question by saying that God became incarnate to provide a remedy for human sin; and two great mediæval schools, the Thomists and Scotists, took opposite sides on this point. The controversy is not even yet over; some maintain that God would have become incarnate whether man had sinned or not, and others assert that human sin is the predisposing cause of the humiliation of Deity. Perhaps a reconciliation might be effected between both extremes if it were recognized that moral evil is here by the good purpose of God, and hence that one main and necessary object of the Incarnation must, in the foreknowledge of God, have been the salvation of men from their sins and sorrows. It is not to the purpose to discuss whether Christ would have been born into the world had man never sinned, for in creating man God must have foreknown that he would sin. On the other hand, however, we may say that it was fitting that in the fulness of time God should send forth His Son, so that men might recognize and obey the very Self of God. God being what He is, it is clear that as soon as humanity was able to receive a revelation so complete as the fact of the Incarnation

provides, such a revelation was just what we might expect. Had there been no Christ of history men to-day would have been wistfully longing for just such an expression of God as Christ brought into the world. We may therefore say that God became man for three reasons: (1) in order that He might realize Himself; (2) in order that He might give to the world a fuller revelation of God; and (3) in order that He might make atonement for sin.

1. He became man *in order that He might realize Himself.* This point we must touch reverently, yet firmly. It has a certain significance. God shares in every experience of the race and lives His life in every individual. The Hegelian philosophy declares that creation is the result of a process in which the Deity realizes Himself. To say less would be to affirm that man purchases in the school of pain an experience of which God is in possession without pain. A nobler thought is that which represents humanity as living its life with God, in God, and for God; and God as living His life in company with men, through men, and by men. That God has a deeper life than humanity can ever touch is certainly the case, but that the life of humanity has immediate value for the life of God is also an indispensable truth. God is the Universal Consciousness within whom are many separate centres of consciousness. God is immediately conscious of all that enters into our individual consciousness; He is, indeed, more conscious of us than we are of ourselves. Yet something more is needed even for Deity than this general consciousness of the flux of creation. God knows being in general; He needs to know human nature in particular. Here, perhaps, is a key to the purpose of the Incarnation. It was fitting that the Captain of our salvation should be made perfect through sufferings. God thus knows Himself through incarnation in a human life, and returns to Himself through humanity.

Previous to His Incarnation, Christ knew, as a Divine person, what was the condition of man on earth—not only knew it, but regarded it with tender interest. The sad music of humanity entered His ear and touched His compassion. It was because of the pitying love He felt for us, that He visited and redeemed us. But it is one thing to look on suffering, and another thing to

suffer; and when Christ not only pitied the miserable, but came down and took up His abode among them, clothed Himself with their nature, lived among them, felt with them, wept with them, suffered with them, was made in all points like them, sin excepted, He acquired a new experience, which suffused the infinite compassion of His Godhead with the glow of a human tenderness. Then He knew the state of man as a sinner by making it His own, and through this personal acquaintance with evil He qualified Himself to be a merciful and faithful High Priest.

Thus, instead of jarring against our idea of God, the Incarnation seems not only natural but delightful to conceive. How often have we ourselves, when affection for the lower creation has been kindled in us, desired in idea to enter into their life for a time, and then to return into ourselves again with a new consciousness of a lower life than our own, and with increased ability and desire to help. And if we have felt this towards a nature not kindred to our own, how much more may God have felt it towards a nature in direct kinship with Himself? It is a noble thought: it ought to commend itself to all who have ever loved purely and passionately, and desired to become at one with the being of those they loved.

¶ Macaulay never wrote more truly than when he said, "It was before Deity embodied in a human form, walking among men, partaking of their infirmities, leaning on their bosoms, weeping over their graves, slumbering in the manger, bleeding on the cross, that the prejudices of the synagogue, and the doubts of the academy, and the fasces of the lictor, and the swords of thirty legions were humbled in the dust." By His very gentleness the incarnate Son does make men great, and he who seeks for purest sympathy and richest solace must betake himself to Christ.[1]

¶ There was once a chaplain to a prison who thought that the prisoners were treated cruelly—more severely than their judges intended them to be; so he determined to live as they lived, to be punished as they were punished, although he had not committed any crime. This is almost exactly what our Lord Jesus Christ did.[2]

2. He became man *in order that He might give to the world a fuller revelation of God.* Nature has in all ages and in all lands

[1] W. M. Taylor, *The Limitations of Life*, 28. [2] J. Robinson Gregory.

spoken of God and taught men to worship Him, but nature has never been able to get beyond a mere declaration of the existence of a Supreme Being, and her disciples must, perforce, erect their altars to the Unknown God, and worship Him in ignorance and through the medium of symbols. Nature is powerless to expound the attributes of Deity. She cannot even, in the face of so much sorrow and suffering on every hand, go so far as to assert His unchanging and unchangeable goodness. She proclaims to us, with her ten thousand voices echoing through earth and sea and sky, that there is a God, but she can tell us no more. Here, then, is the province of revelation. From a world sitting in darkness there is borne upwards a cry whose burden is, "More light! more light!" And the cry is heard, the petition is granted, and through the deep gloom of the shadow-wrapped land a voice resounds, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come!"

When Christ came, He, and He first, taught us that we, with our sin-stained lips, might call upon God as "Our Father which art in heaven." Thus a new relationship altogether was (not established but) revealed between the Creator and the creature, and that connection which David faintly foreshadowed when he said, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him," was shown by our Saviour to be not a semblance but a reality.

¶ If a friend visits you, you like to show him your most valued possessions. If you are a gardener you take him to see the loveliest flower in your conservatory. If you are an artist you lead him to your studio and show him your best picture. If you are an author you place your favourite volume in his hand. Now God wishes man to know what He glories in, what He deems His best possession, what affords Him more joy than anything else. He wishes to give us the knowledge of His glory. What does He glory in? What does He wish us to know above everything else?

Does He wish us to know His power? Certainly not. That might impress some. But He placed our first parents in the Garden of Eden. Great loveliness was there, but no special manifestation of power. I notice that when kings and other potentates visit one another they are taken to see the arsenal, or the army, or the fleet. The host is very anxious to give the guests a great idea of his power. This is one of the many particulars in which the King of kings is essentially different from all

other kings. He put our first parents in the Garden of Eden where there was no great display of power. He might have placed them on some solitary island, around which great oceans leaped and rolled. But He has never gone out of His way to impress men with His power. Neither has He ever sought to overwhelm them with His wisdom. It is only lately that He has begun to unfold to us, on a large scale, the marvels of His knowledge. The physical sciences are exceedingly modern. It is only in our own lifetime that God has permitted us, by the use of such modern inventions as the microscope, the telescope, and the spectroscope, to find out the wonders of His skill. He was in no hurry to impress us with that. Nothing can be more absurd, or wicked, or degraded, than the idolatrous worship of mere cleverness. We may be as clever or as powerful as Satan himself, and yet as odious and degraded. God does not glory either in power or in wisdom.

But what God does glory in, what He has been trying to reveal to us from the beginning, what He wishes us to know more than anything else, is that His nature is love! He wishes to persuade us that He attaches an immeasurably higher value to love than to power or to wisdom. Where shall we find words to describe the rapture of man when he discovers that "God is love"? One of the most delightful passages in human biography is in the life of Henry Ward Beecher. He was brought up in a narrow, hard, Calvinistic school. For a long time he groped in darkness and misery. The name of God was to him a name of terror. But with glowing eloquence and delight he tells us how on one memorable day it dawned upon him that God is love. At once the whole universe was radiant with new beauty. Everything was changed. He was changed. He passed from hell to heaven, and the light of that rapturous moment never passed away. But neither to him nor to us could that vivid and full knowledge of the love of God ever have come except in the face of Jesus Christ. All previous revelations are summed up, supplemented, and completed in Christ. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). There is "life for a look" at that face.[1]

3. But the grand reason why God became man in Christ, the New Testament tells us, was *that He might make propitiation or atonement for sin.* This is the great reason which Anselm discusses in his own way in his book. The law had something to say in Court, as it were, with regard to the bestowment of an absolutely gratuitous pardon, and the right to claim that its

[1] H. Price Hughes, *Essential Christianity*, 50.

principles and requirements should be duly conserved and satisfied. Now the Incarnation of the Son of God and His perfect obedience to the law, thus "magnifying the law and maintaining its honour," fully met the case. He fully met all the requirements which the law might put forth with a view to securing a free pardon, and He did it as man's Head and Representative. Accordingly, when the penitent sinner accepts Christ in His incarnate fulness—His law-satisfying life and death—Christ's law-satisfying life and death practically and substantially become the sinner's own, and count for his salvation. Thus it follows that while pardon is freely given, the law is duly honoured, maintained, and even fulfilled. Christ Himself declares that He came "to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28). As St. John puts it, God "loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10).

And this brings new life into the world. Christ is the propitiation for His people through whom they recover their lost place in the Divine favour. But besides this, He is their life, and is made to them a quickening spirit. To Him they are indebted for their new existence; in His likeness they are renewed; on Him they depend; and in Him they find their unity. His own favourite image of the relation is that of a tree: "I am the vine; ye are the branches." The branches spring from the tree; they are nourished by it; they are in union with it; and so believers have their being from Christ; they live in Him; they are one with Him.

¶ The Incarnation of the Son of God has not left human nature where it was, but imported into it a new Divine splendour. Wonderful as man was in his created likeness to God, the entrance of the Son of God into the vital body of humanity has raised human nature to a higher point than it ever attained before. This, like the Incarnation itself, is as difficult to define as it is clearly a fact. When "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among men," the measurements of humanity had to be taken from a new height, even from the glory of the Son of Man.[1]

So the Lord of all things,
Caring for His own,
Even for the small things
Left His golden throne.

[1] J. Thomas, *The Mysteries of Grace*, 24.

Down the mystic stairway,
To the bourne of earth,
Of the womb of Mary,
By a human birth,

Came the Sun of Healing
Above human ken,
All His might concealing
From the sons of men.

That He might precede them,
Out of pain and strife,
Head them, join them, teach them, lead them
Into fuller life.

For the life diurnal
Waxeth old and dim;
Love and life eternal
Rest alone in Him!

All is in the story
How the Christ brought good
In a costly crimson glory
Of His Brotherhood.[1]

II.

The Human Life.

"And dwelt among us, full of grace and truth."

The Nativity was but the beginning of a long work. The Son of God not only came as man, but He grew as man grows. He passed through the stages of human development, "tempted in all points" even as we are. He consecrated not our nature only, but our life. "He dwelt among us." He shared the transitory joys and griefs—the spirit of righteous anger and the spirit of thankful exultation—which belong to us. "He tabernacled among us,"—to preserve the idea of the original, which carries us back to the time when the people of Israel wandered as pilgrims in the wilderness, and the visible glory of the Lord rested when they should rest and guided their forward path, the sign and type of God's abiding presence. Even so it was

[1] John W. Taylor, *The Doorkeeper*, 5.

with Christ. He tabernacled with us, and the faithful beheld His glory. He marked out the path of life. He hallowed each resting-place upon the way. The material splendour of the fiery pillar was changed into a spiritual beacon; but it was still clear with the light of heaven—clear to the loving. But even here, as of old time, that which is the light of the Christian is the thick gloom which enwraps the unbelieving—the thick gloom or even the consuming fire.

We know, we feel, we value all that He gave up. We know how He passed through that life of man on earth, which He accepted from its beginning to its close. We know that there is nothing so pinched and hard and trying in man's condition that it was not His will to go through. We know that there is nothing so mean and scorned, so rough and dangerous in what the poor of this world have to put up with that did not fall to His lot when He came among men. That we might not feel Him to be in lot and condition *above* any of us, He chose to be *below* most of us—on a level with the meanest and the most helpless. He asked for no privilege as the Son of God; He refused nothing appointed to man to go through; He desired not to be spared any burden of our mortal state. As each thing came in the course of years, He accepted it. He hurried nothing; He waited till the years should change the babe into the child, and the child into the boy, and the boy into the man. For He came to be among us, not a passing vision, or a strange spectacle, but actually and in earnest to be man with men, to be "flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone," to bind us to Himself in life, and in death, and in resurrection. He came that we might see and know that, being what He was, He had made Himself one of ourselves, living our very life, feeling, suffering, buffeted, tempted like man, but without man's sin.

¶ What must it be, only to be a man, when you think what He did to save and to bless mankind? What must it be, only to be a man, when you think that it is to be what Jesus Christ was once—and is now at the Father's right hand? Let it be enough, to be of that nature which God cared for so wonderfully, for which He has opened such a road to perfection, for which He has provided such wondrous hopes. It cannot be a small thing to be a man—to be what our God and Maker was pleased to become, that He might be more closely joined to us. It cannot be a small

thing to be man, with man's destiny; to be man, with the honour put on man by God.[1]

1. The Word "dwelt among us." There can be little doubt that the author had in mind the Shekinah of the temple of the old dispensation. Biblical history tells us that after the erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness, the glory of God descended with the pillar of cloud and took possession of the Holy of Holies, and abode there upon the cherubic throne. So in the temple, the God of Israel was enthroned in theophanic glory in the Holy of Holies, on the outstretched wings of the cherubim. The tabernacle and the temple, its historic successor, continued, until the destruction of Jerusalem at the Babylonian exile, to be the dwelling-place of God enthroned upon the cherubim. Just as the temple was the abiding presence of the theophanic God in the old dispensation, just so the Word of God tabernacled in the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth.

All that was glorious in the conception of the Shekinah and the temple of the old dispensation became still more glorious in Jesus Christ; only that glory was veiled and hidden in His flesh, as the Shekinah had been hidden in the innermost throne-room of the temple. But this veiling of the glory of the Word was only a temporary veiling, during His earthly life; when the veil of the temple of Jerusalem was rent by an earthquake, the veil of the flesh of the Son of God was also rent, and when His body arose from the tomb, the body of the risen Lord no longer veiled the glory, but transmitted it in Christophanies to His disciples.

¶ The process of the Incarnation St. John describes very simply. The Jews were familiar with the idea of God dwelling with His people. By the word St. John here uses he links the body of Christ to the ancient dwelling of God round which the tents of Israel had clustered. God now dwelt among men in the humanity of Jesus Christ. The tabernacle was human, the indwelling Person was Divine. In Christ is realized the actual presence of God among His people, the actual entrance into and personal participation in human history which was hinted at in the tabernacle and the temple.[2]

2. "Full of grace and truth." St. John had a special form of

[1] Dean Church, *The Message of Peace*, 170.

[2] M. Dods, *Footsteps in the Path of Life*, 19.

the manifestation of grace and truth before his mind when he wrote these words. He was thinking of the covenant God, who proclaimed Himself to Moses on the mount when He descended in the cloud as "Jehovah, Jehovah, a God full of compassion, and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth." He was thinking of David's prayer, "O prepare loving-kindness and truth"; and his heart burned within him as he saw them now prepared. It was the thought of Christ's redeeming work that filled his mind, and that led him to sum up the revelation of the Incarnation in the revelation of grace and truth. Therefore he says, not "love," but "grace"—undeserved love to sinners. And in "truth" he is thinking chiefly of Christ's "faithfulness." The Divine glory that rested as a nimbus on the Lord's head was compounded before all else of His ineffable love for the unlovely, of His changeless faithfulness to the unfaithful. For in Christ, God commended His love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Nevertheless, it would be a serious error to confine the words as here used to this single reference. This is rather the culmination and climax of their meaning than the whole extent and meaning of it. Christ is not only love as manifested in grace, but as the God of love manifest in the flesh He is love itself in all its height and breadth. Not only the loftiest reaches of love, love for the undeserving, find their model in Him, but all the love that is in the world finds its source and must seek its support in Him. His was the love that wept at the grave of a friend and over the earthly sorrows of Jerusalem, that yearned with the bereaved mother at Nain, and took the little children into His arms to bless them; as well as the love that availed to offer Himself a sacrifice for sin. In like manner, that St. John has especially in mind here the highest manifestations of truth—our Lord's trustiness in the great work of salvation—in no way empties the word of its lower contents. He is still the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world; and all the truth that is in the world comes from Him and must seek its strength in Him. "We beheld his glory," says the Apostle, "*full*"—complete, perfect—"of grace and truth." And perfection of love and truth avails for all their manifestations. This man, the man Christ Jesus, could not act in any relation otherwise than

lovingly, could not speak on any subject otherwise than truly. He is the pure fountain of love and truth.

(1) Grace and truth are spoken of *in the concrete*. The Apostle says that the only begotten is "full of grace and truth." He did not come to tell us about grace, but actually to bring us grace. He is not full of the news of grace and truth, but of grace and truth themselves. Others had been messengers of gracious tidings, but He came to bring grace. Others teach us truth, but Jesus is the truth. He is that grace and truth whereof others spake.

(2) The grace and truth are *blended*. The "and" between the two words is more than a common conjunction. The two rivers unite in one fulness—"Full of grace and truth": that is to say, the grace is truthful grace, grace not in fiction or in fancy, grace not to be hoped for and to be dreamed of, but grace every atom of which is fact; redemption which does redeem, pardon which does blot out sin, renewal which actually regenerates, salvation which completely saves. We have not here blessings which charm the ear and cheat the soul; but real, substantial favours from God that cannot lie. Then blend these things the other way. "Grace and truth": the Lord has come to bring us truth, but it is not the kind of truth which censures, condemns, and punishes; it is gracious truth, truth steeped in love, truth saturated with mercy. The truth which Jesus brings to His people comes not from the judgment-seat, but from the mercy-seat; it has a gracious drift and aim about it, and ever tends to salvation. His light is the life of men. The grace is all true, and the truth is all gracious.

¶ There are souls which easily bestow grace, which find it not hard to forgive, but they have often a dim perception of the majesty of that truth which has been violated. There are souls which have a clear perception of the majesty of truth and a deep sense of the sin that swerves from it, but they are often inexorable in their justice and unable to pardon; they have more truth than grace. Here there is a perfect blending of extremes—fulness of grace united to fulness of truth. There is a forgiveness which is valueless because there is no sense of wrong; there is a sense of wrong which is forbidding because there is no power of forgiveness. Here perfect forgiveness is joined with perfect perception. The glory of Christ's love is that it comes not from darkness

but from light; He forgave the sinner because He bore the sin.[1]

¶ I was eight years old, I believe, when another boy, a little older than myself, told me that we owed the Christmas gifts to our parents, that they did not come from heaven. This gave me such a shock that I fell with both my fists upon the boy, pommelling him with all my might; but I got the worst of the battle, almost the only one I fought in my life, and came home crying to ask for confirmation of the dreadful tale. My dear mother had to give it, but did it in such a delicate way that, although I felt the mysterious poetry of that night was gone, my love for my parents was increased.[2]

i. Grace.

Men who had been accustomed to hear of religion solely as stereotyped tradition or condemning law, "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth," so full was He of the revealed mercy of God to sinners. That was the general impression made by His life and ministry. And it is the impression made to-day by the record of it. We see Him still across the distance of ages, as that Divine head rises above the corn-fields through which He walked; we see Him under the trees at eventide, or sitting on Jacob's well at noon, or in the boat at the edge of Tiberias, or standing in the meadows above Bethsaida. Everywhere the impression made concerning Him is the same. It is Divine Love in earnest, seeking and saving that which was lost. We here look, not upon a speculative teacher, or a great analyst of the mystery of human life, or a disputatious theologue pouring forth doctrines and articles of belief, or a mighty intellect addressing the human understanding so as to found a school, but on a living practical love, descending into the midst of men's sufferings and sins, and earnestly labouring to relieve them.

¶ Grace is power. That power whereby God works in nature is called power. That power whereby He works in the wills of His reasonable creatures is called grace.[3]

¶ Grace is a force in the spiritual order, not simply God's unmerited kindness in the abstract, but such kindness in action

[1] G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, 221.
[2] *Life and Letters of Sir Charles Hallé*, 20.
[3] J. B. Mozley, *On Predestination*, 302.

as a movement of His Spirit within the soul, resulting from the Incarnation, and imparting to the will and the affections a new capacity of obedience and love.[1]

¶ Grace is not simply kindly feeling on the part of God, but a positive boon conferred on man. Grace is a real and active force: it is "the power that worketh in us," illuminating the intellect, warming the heart, strengthening the will of redeemed humanity. It is the might of the Everlasting Spirit, renovating man by uniting him, whether immediately or through the Sacraments, to the Sacred Manhood of the Word Incarnate.[2]

1. Grace is a revelation of the will of God now. A child knows something of the mind and will of the parent from personal contact with that parent, but not from the rules, or only to a very slender degree from the rules, which are laid down for its guidance. But when we turn from Law to Grace, then we see at once that we are now dealing with a revelation of the mind and the will of Him from whom the grace proceeds. Each act of favour which a parent bestows upon his child, or which a sovereign bestows upon his subject, is a revelation, so far as it goes, of the mind and will of the parent towards that particular child, or of the sovereign towards that particular subject, as the case may be. And even so every act of grace which we receive from God is a revelation, so far as it goes, of the mind and will of God towards us who are affected by the act. And if it be so with each of these acts of favour, obviously grace as a whole must be regarded as nothing less than a complete manifestation of the mind and will of God Himself towards us, that is to say, so far as any manifestation of the Infinite to finite intelligence can be complete.

2. The words "full of grace" not only comprise the supply of all that sinners need on earth, they include heaven itself in reversion. These sunbeams fly over an eternal future. Other rays of light are lost in distance, swallowed up at last in darkness, absorbed in the bosom of eternal night; but these go forward, bright as at first, into the profound, and reveal along the surface of that shoreless ocean the isles of the blessed stretching onward to an horizon beyond which no eye but One can direct a space-

[1] W. Bright, *Anti-Pelagian Treatises of St. Augustine*, x.
[2] H. P. Liddon, *University Sermons*, i. 44.

penetrating beam. "He seeth under the whole heaven"; and that which He sees is "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

ii. Truth.

The living Word, the voice of God walking among men, was "full of truth," as well as of grace. The expressions of the Evangelist, being prompted by a very real inspiration of Him who is Light, resemble sun-rays. They contain more than a single element of meaning, they fly in complex glory through the ages. If St. John had been asked what he meant by his phrase "full of truth," he would doubtless have said, I mean that He was full of *reality*, full of *sincerity*, full of *instruction*. There is no sense in which you can employ the word Truth without making it describe Him, who was the "Amen," "the faithful and true witness." Let us think, then, of Jesus Christ under each aspect. Let the three rays, the violet, the crimson, the gold, as they pass through the prism of our analysis, fall in succession upon the sacred head of this Prince of the Kings of the Earth.

1. He was full of *Reality*.—We know what we mean when we say that we have met with a real man. This is a world of false appearances, of poverty striving to set up and maintain a respectable exterior, of cheap materials set forth so as to look rich and fine; a world of paint, varnish, stucco, and veneer. So is it in character; a world much more than half filled with people trying to pass themselves off for something greater and better than the reality, for wiser, richer, more learned, and more beautiful than they actually are. The experience of life deepens the persuasion that the majority will not bear a close examination of the "inward parts." The religious public is in the same condemnation. In Christ's time religious society was one complicated pretence. But look at the Christ! He is real, genuine, solid to the centre. He is at the heart what He is at the surface. We shall never find Him different from that which we see Him now. The zeal of God burns in an inextinguishable flame in the deepest recesses of His spirit. He means all that He says. His acts are exactly parallel with His words. His passions move by the same rule as His thoughts. We never know any man thoroughly until we see him under excitement. Jesus when

excited is animated by the same inspiration as in repose. "The zeal of God's house" is the fiery cloak which enfolds Him.

¶ Professor Huxley was no model man, but his son describes some characteristics that ought to be felt to be model when he sets forth "that passion for veracity which was perhaps his strongest characteristic, an uncompromising passion for truth in thought, which would admit no particle of self-deception, no assertion beyond what could be verified; for truth in act, perfect straightforwardness and sincerity, with complete disregard of personal consequences for uttering unpalatable fact. Truthfulness in his eyes was the cardinal virtue, without which no stable society can exist. . . . The lie from interested motives was only more hateful to him than the lie from self-delusion or foggy thinking. . . . In his mind, no compromise was possible between truth and untruth."[1]

2. He was full of *Sincerity*.—This is one of the chief impressions made on all readers of the Gospels, that Jesus of Nazareth was perfectly honest, that He was not a conscious impostor, that He spoke with a strength and depth of sincerity which raised Him far above the level of ordinary witnesses. The frank and penetrating beam of His holy eye rests on every one who contemplates Him in the mirror of the gospel history. The goodness of His nature was a pledge of His honesty.

¶ Perhaps no warmer encomium was ever passed upon faulty man than this of Mrs. Hutchinson upon her husband, who was Governor of Nottingham Castle during the English Civil War: "He never professed the thing he intended not, nor promised what he believed out of his power, nor failed in the performance of anything that was in his power to fulfil."

3. He was full of truth in being full of *Instruction*.—He made human nature appear to be what it is, a grand and solemn thing. He made human life in its moral aspects seem an arena where issues of infinite importance are at stake. He made the soul of man seem an awfully real existence within him. He made right and wrong seem as distinct as noon and midnight. He made the Almighty appear a Being real and near, overshadowing the earth with His excellent glory. His countenance blazed like the sun with the splendour of God. Aforetime the Deity had been faintly revealed in events, in descriptions, in institutions,

[1] R. E. Speer, *The Marks of a Man*, 24.

in nature; but in Him God became visible. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He caused the invisible world to appear to the soul as real as the visible. He was in manifest communion with the unseen. He opened the Scriptures, and the world of the present, and the realms of the dead, and the future eternity, and compelled men to feel that these bursts of supreme inspiration were but the first outbreakings of a fountain which would flow through eternity.[1]

¶ Truth lives and thrives in her fair house of Learned Theory. But its grand, pillared front is too high, its wide doors too rich and ponderous; her form as she moves within is too fair and proud and queenly for common men to dare to come and enter her great gates and ask to learn of God and Nature and their own humanity from her lips. Rather will they stand without for ever, looking from far away upon the towers of her wondrous home and see the great Mistress walking with a few bold scholars through the greenness of her trees, deeming it all a thing in which there is no part for them. So then, fair Truth, that she may claim her right to govern from her readiness to help all men, lays by her gorgeous robes, takes the plain white mantle of most simple faith, comes down from her great house, and goes along the crowded street and close lanes of poor men's homes, with a lesson and a smile for each, a soothing touch for the sick child's forehead, a helping word for the poor working woman, a passing look that makes the strong man's heart more strong and happy, long after she has passed back to her house.[2]

¶ This inner admonition which compels us to the thought of God, to the thirst for Him, to the search after Him, comes to us from the source of all Truth. It is the sun which shines within our souls. It is the truth which we divine when, our eyes being too feeble, or too suddenly opened, we are afraid to look it in the face. It is none other than God Himself, in His changeless perfection. So long as we persist in seeking to satisfy our thirst elsewhere than at this fountain, we must admit that we have not attained our proper goal, and therefore, though God be for us, we are neither wise nor happy. Complete satisfaction of soul, the truly happy life, is to know purely and fully what Truth itself is, what conducts in the search after it, and by what relations it connects us with the supreme perfection. These three demonstrate to purified souls the one only God, the one only Reality, in distinction from the self-contradicting fables of superstition.[3]

[1] E. White, *The Mystery of Growth*, 91.
[2] Phillips Brooks, 73.
[3] St. Augustine, *Soliloquies*, xxxvi.

Despised! Rejected by the priest-led roar
Of the multitude! The imperial purple flung
About the form the hissing scourge had stung,
Witnessing naked to the truth it bore!
True Son of Father true, I Thee adore,
Even the mocking purple truthful hung
On Thy true shoulders, bleeding its folds among,
For Thou wast king, art king for evermore!
I know the Father: he knows me the truth.
Truth-witness, therefore the one essential king,
With Thee I die, with Thee live worshipping!
O human God, O brother, eldest born,
Never but Thee was there a man in sooth,
Never a true crown but Thy crown of thorn![1]

III.

Divinity discovered in Humanity.

"We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father."

The New Testament embodies this unique Apostolic experience. There are critical considerations which give a graduated value to its materials. Some portions are more near the centre than others. Some passages and sections are relegated to the fringe. Some may have a doubtful claim. There is a certain variance in tone: a certain growth: a certain personal element. All this can be allowed for, and rationally examined and classified and estimated. But the main bulk is there, as the record of the impression which was made on those who came within that incomparable and authoritative experience. This is what they said who saw and touched and handled and proved the living Presence of the Christ. This is what it came to. This is the thing that happened to them, and this is the language in which they came to express it. They could not say what they had passed through in any other way. They could not find any other type of terms that would adequately convey to themselves or to others the fact which experience had pressed home upon their innermost being.

[1] George MacDonald, *Poetical Works*, i. 259.

And how would they express it? What are the words in which they present it? Well, they could not stop short of an ultimate verdict, which became quite inevitable to all those who came under the supreme experience. They might tremble to say it; or wonder how it came to be so inevitable; or brood over it before they said it; or find it break from them in a single outburst of irresistible inspiration. But one and all come to it. One and all say it. One and all feel that nothing short of it will adequately signalize their inward conviction. It was impossible to be inside that experience of living with Jesus, or of seeing Him in His Risen Reality, without letting their belief culminate and crystallize in a simple victorious expression. The Word had been made Flesh. It was "the Word of God" in human flesh. God had sent forth His Son. "Truly, this was the Christ, the Son of the Highest." "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son," "the express image of his Person." "We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father." "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son . . . in the likeness of sinful flesh, to condemn sin in the flesh." It must come to that. That is the heart and core of the whole matter. That is the joy and the fellowship into which believers are invited by those to whom the Life was manifested—the Eternal Life which was with the Father. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." "We know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ." "This is the true God, and Eternal Life."

I know what beauty is, for Thou
  Hast set the world within my heart;
  Of me Thou madest it a part;
I never loved it more than now.

I know the Sabbath afternoons;
  The light asleep upon the graves;
  Against the sky the poplar waves;
The river murmurs organ tunes.

I know the spring with bud and bell;
  The hush in summer woods at night;
  Autumn, when leaves let in more light;
Fantastic winter's lovely spell.

I know the rapture music gives,
  Its mystery of ordered tones:
  Dream-muffled soul, it loves and moans,
And, half-alive, comes in and lives.

And verse I know, whose concord high
  Of thought and music lifts the soul
  Where many a glimmering starry shoal
Glides through the Godhead's living sky.

Yea, Beauty's regnant All I know—
  The imperial head, the thoughtful eyes;
  The God-imprisoned harmonies
That out in gracious motions go.

But I leave all, O Son of man,
  Put off my shoes, and come to Thee,
  Most lovely Thou of all I see,
Most potent Thou of all that can!

As child forsakes his favourite toy,
  His sisters' sport, his new-found nest,
  And, climbing to his mother's breast,
Enjoys yet more his late-left joy—

I lose to find. On fair-browed bride
  Fair pearls their fairest light afford;
  So, gathered round Thy glory, Lord,
All glory else is glorified.[1]

1. "We beheld his glory." St. John is telling us what of his own immediate knowledge he knows—testifying what he had heard, what he had seen with his eyes, what he had beheld and his hands had handled. An eye-witness to Christ's majesty, he had seen His glory and bears his willing witness to it. Nor must we fancy that he gives us merely a subjective opinion of his own, as if he were telling us only that the man Jesus was so full of grace and truth in His daily walk that he, looking upon Him admiringly, had been led to conjecture that He was more than man. He testifies not to subjective opinion but to objective fact. And precisely what St. John witnesses is that the Word did become flesh, and dwelt among men, full of grace and truth, and

[1] George MacDonald.

that the blaze of His glory was manifest to every seeing eye that looked upon Him.

2. There would be several facts which would stand out with peculiar prominence before St. John's mind when he thought of the glory of the Divine Word as manifested in the human life of Jesus Christ.

(1) He might probably have in mind, for example, that vision which was granted to St. Peter, St. James, and himself, when the Lord was transfigured on the Mount. He who had been taken apart by Christ, and had seen the fashion of his Lord's visage changed, so as to shine bright as the light, and His raiment to become white and glistering,—that visage, which was so marred more than any man, made for the while fairer than the fairest, and those poor garments changed for the vesture of angels,—he who had witnessed (whether in the body, or out of the body) such a transfiguration as this might well say that even in the midst of His humiliation the glory of the Incarnate Word had been seen by him.

(2) Or again, the Evangelist might have in his thoughts those works of wonder, and at the same time of mercy, whereby the Lord had given evidence from time to time of the advent of a new power in the world. He might remember how the blind had received their sight, how the deaf had been made to hear, how the sick had been healed, and the lepers cleansed, nay, how the dead had risen up as if from sleep when bid to do so by the voice of Christ; he who had witnessed for the space of three years and more such works as these must have been blind indeed if the veil of human flesh had quite prevented him from recognizing the glory which was ever manifesting itself forth in acts of Divine goodness and power.

(3) Or still further, it may be that in using such language as that of the text, St. John had reference to those two great events to which the mind of any disciple who was taunted with worshipping a crucified Lord would instinctively turn, namely, the Resurrection and the Ascension. We can easily understand how the patent fact of the crucifixion should have appeared, to those who knew no more of Christ, to have reduced His claims to an absurdity, how the Cross should have proved a stumbling-block

to one class of minds and folly to another,—there is nothing to surprise us in this,—but the death of their Master would imply to His disciples no destruction of the faith, because they knew that He who was dead and buried rose again from the dead, and ascended into Heaven. And how could St. John above all, who had been first of the disciples at the empty sepulchre, and had been one of the company from whose presence the Lord was taken up,—how could he fail to testify that, however much the weakness of human flesh, the acknowledged truth that Jesus Christ had died, might seem to Jews and Greeks a fatal obstacle to the faith, it was very different with those who had beheld the glory of Christ, declared to be the only begotten Son by the Resurrection from the dead and the Ascension to the right hand of God?

3. "We beheld his glory." That is the Apostle's deliberate answer; that is his description of the process which gained them conviction. "We beheld." They used the help both of eyes and of mind; for the word suggests that they saw as men see when they let their minds follow their eyes—when they watch and think and learn as they look. The Apostles had had no brief and unsteady sight of the Master. They had had time given them to rest their gaze upon Him, and to continue looking, as He moved, as He spoke, as He went up and down with them. In many moods and varied scenes, in hope and in fear, in exaltation and in depression, by day and by night, alone and in a crowd, as a Prophet in the glare of the public sun, as a Friend in the secrecy of confidence, in a thousand incidents unforeseen and surprising —in all they had been close, very close, to Him, and had looked with all their eyes, and had hung upon Him with all their souls, and had meditated over all that they saw, and had pondered and had brooded, and had done this slowly, by degrees, habitually, moving forward step by step to this great conclusion. So they had seen; in this sure and tested study of Him, they had lived and walked; and what was it they found by so looking?

4. Of one thing they were convinced. That which they found in Him was something that had not been in the world at all before Jesus came. It was not merely a higher form of that which had been already in others, even in the highest—in the Baptist, or in Moses. As they had known all that the Baptist

could do, so, too, they had felt all that Moses could bring them. He had brought them a great gift. He had given them a law from God. But this peculiar grace and life which they now had received came into the world in Jesus Christ, and in Him only. So strange, so new, so marvellous, so incomparable was this deep secret on which they had found themselves gazing. And what was it, then, this secret? How could it be told, this discovery? "Well," the Apostle says, "it was nothing short of the supreme vision of all visions. It was (and we, as we waited and watched, became more and more certain of it)—it was the disclosure, the unveiling of God Himself. It was in character, in substance, in reality, God's own glory. Whatever men have found God to be, whatever our fathers of old time felt God to be, as He shone in upon their hearts through the splendour of the Shekinah in the Tabernacle of Moses, that same thing Jesus showed Himself to be to us who so closely studied and loved Him. We saw Him, saw Him long, saw Him very near, saw Him very carefully; and what we saw in Him was the glory of God—the glory as of the only begotten Son of the Almighty Father."

That human character, what was it? Was it simply one character among many? Was it a superlatively good man side by side with whom there were the Caiaphases and the Pilates, the weak men and the desperately wicked men? Was it simply one out of many? No, it had dawned upon them more and more that here He had not only one human character, He had something which drew from deeper depths than that, and covered an infinitely wider area. True, He was very Man, the Word was indeed made flesh, but that which they saw here in the reality of human nature was nothing less than the Divine Being, no other than the Eternal Son. The Word, the Son of God, had been made flesh; this human character was God's character; this human love, this human justice, this human severity, this human compassion, are the Divine love, the eternal love, the eternal justice, the eternal severity, the eternal compassion. Verily, it is God made man! And here in the intelligible form of a human character we have disclosed to us the great secret of God. No man has seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son—God only begotten—He declared it.

¶ In the rays of the sun, the topaz surpasses in splendour all

precious stones; and even so does the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ excel in glory and in majesty all the saints and all the angels because of His union with the eternal Father. And in this union the reflection of the Divine Sun is so clear and glorious that it attracts and reflects in its clearness all the eyes of saints and angels in immediate vision, and those also of just men to whom its splendour is revealed. So likewise does the topaz attract and reflect in itself the eyes of those who behold it, because of its great clearness. But if you were to cut the topaz it would darken, while if you leave it in its natural state it will remain clear. And so, too, if you examine and try to penetrate the splendour of the eternal Word, that splendour will darken and you will lose it. But leave it as it is, and follow it with earnest gaze, and with self-abnegation, and it will give you light.[1]

5. The doctrine of the Incarnation involves the reality of the Divine Sonship of Jesus. "The Word was God." We have here a substantive used as an adjective. The Word was Divine in essential being. And this essentially Divine Being "became flesh and dwelt among us." The man Christ Jesus was the Son of God. Translate the term "Word" into the language of personality, it becomes "Son." Such was the faith to which the Apostles bore witness, into which many who had seen Jesus of Nazareth, and heard His voice, and followed Him, grew. It was a faith which had power to propagate itself; it knows not how to die.

¶ The first preachers of the gospel were aware how the language they used about Jesus would strike the ear, how it would startle men to be told that Jesus had come from heaven to earth; that the Father had singled Him out from all others, had watched and guarded and glorified Him as the Son of His begetting and His love. They were Jews, with the first commandment ringing in their ears, followed by the second and the third, which fence about the Divine Name from intrusive curiosity and undisciplined fancy and too fervent speech. They knew what their words meant; how the faith they aimed at awakening would draw men's thoughts more and more to Jesus; how worshippers would no longer seek to scale the distant heavens, but would let affection settle, and the heart's worship centre, in a human life. They knew that a passionate loyalty would be kindled toward Christ; that tragedies of devotion would result

[1] M. Maeterlinck, *Ruysbroeck and The Mystics*, 61.

from it; that when once that faith was rooted in the soul it would mean a

> Toiling up new Calvaries ever,
> With the Cross that turns not back.

And they could not but speak the things which they had seen and known; this was their deepest faith, their clearest knowledge, their surest certainty, and it must be spoken. And the generations which have followed them have felt the same necessity. The same solemn constraint of faith and confession is upon us.[1]

[1] A. Mackennal, *The Eternal Son of God and The Human Sonship*, 18.

The Lamb of God.

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THE LAMB OF GOD.

On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!—John i. 29.

1. THE importance of the Baptist's ministry becomes fully intelligible only when his teaching is placed over against the characteristics of the religious thought of his day. It is no far-fetched analogy to liken his work, in one respect, to that of the Reformers of the sixteenth century. He made a great attempt to go back from the accretions of a later age to the purer doctrine of the Scriptures.

Pharisaism had, both directly and indirectly, done vast damage to the spiritual life of Palestine. It had "bound" upon men's aching backs "heavy burdens and grievous to be borne." Righteousness had been made to consist in the punctilious discharge of a multitude of ceremonial obligations. The conception of God as a loving and gracious Father had to no small extent been thrust into the background, while in the forefront of Pharisaic teaching was the idea of "a servile relationship"—God as the Master, man as the servant who was required to perform certain duties, and had a right, in return, to the Divine favour. A free, healthy spiritual life was thus made impossible, while encouragement was given, on the one hand to religious self-complacency and self-confidence, and on the other to hypocrisy, and equivocation, and subterfuge.

The effect of such encouragement was only too plain in connection with the popular anticipations of the Divine Kingdom. These anticipations always included the triumph of Israel and the overthrow of the heathen; but they took little or no account of Israel's own unworthiness, of Israel's own moral and spiritual failure, of Israel's own utter need of reconciliation and re-

generation. The Judaism of that day failed to realize what sin must mean for God's chosen people. Controlled to a great extent by the Pharisees, it insisted with wearisome urgency upon offering, ablution, fast, or tithe, but it "left undone the weightier matters of the law." It refused to contemplate the possibility of a day of wrath coming for Israel.

At a critical hour in the fortunes of the nation John the Baptist sought to create a stricter, juster, healthier sense of the requirements of real religion. His teaching was the strong and uncompromising corrective of the prevailing fallacies and errors. He attacked with all his might the fabric of belief in privilege which confronted him like some enemy's stronghold. He told his auditors that their Abrahamic descent would afford them no refuge from the judgment which was impending. A new life! A new mind! Purity of heart and conscience! Self-separation from the guilty past!—herein lay the hope of salvation. It was the teaching of the Old Testament at its highest and best. The prophets had ever laid stress upon the renewal of the inner life through the operation of the Divine grace; and it was this idea that animated all the ministry of the appointed Forerunner of the Lord.

Thine, Baptist, was the cry,
In ages long gone by,
Heard in clear accents by the Prophet's ear;
As if 'twere thine to wait,
And with imperial state
Herald some Eastern monarch's proud career;
Who thus might march his host in full array,
And speed through trackless wilds his unresisted way.

But other task hadst thou
Than lofty hills to bow,
Make straight the crooked, the rough places plain:
Thine was the harder part
To smooth the human heart,
The wilderness where sin had fixed his reign;
To make deceit his mazy wiles forego,
Bring down high vaulting pride, and lay ambition low.

Such, Baptist, was thy care,
That no objection there,

Might check the progress of the King of kings;
But that a clear highway
Might welcome the array
Of Heavenly graces which His Presence brings;
And where Repentance had prepared the road,
There Faith might enter in, and Love to man and God.[1]

2. Two utterances mark the flood-tide of St. John's prophetic inspiration; for when he says of his greater successor, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire," the very term "baptize" connects his thought with "the divers washings" under the old dispensation, while the words "with the Holy Ghost and with fire" fore-herald that ministration of the Spirit which was ushered in on the day of Pentecost. So, again, when he exclaimed, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" the phraseology in which he describes the great propitiation of Christ is seen at once to be derived from the typical sacrifices with which as the son of a priest he was perfectly familiar; while the mention of "the world" gives a wider range to the efficacy of the Atonement than the common Jew would have assigned to it, and is the prelude of the great commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." In the former instance it would almost seem that he had received a vision of the Upper Room at the moment when, to the disciples assembled in it, there appeared "cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." In the latter he appears to have had a revelation of the uplifted Christ on Calvary drawing all men unto Him.

The text is "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away [margin "beareth"] the sin of the world!" Let us consider it in this way—

I. The Sin of the World.
II. The Lamb of God.
III. The Lamb and the Sin.

I.

The Sin of the World.

1. *Sin.*—Sin, the choice of evil instead of good, the perversion of the desires, the slavery of the will, the darkening of the mind,

[1] Richard Mant.

the deadly sickness of the whole heart—this is the fountain of all trouble, the cause of all disorder and wretchedness. This is the wall which makes the world seem sometimes like a prison and sometimes like a madhouse. This is the curse which destroys life's harmony and beauty. This is the obstacle which separates the soul, in darkness and sorrow, from God. The forms of every religion, the voice of unceasing prayers, the smoke of endless burnt-offerings, the blood of bulls and goats, the oblations of all that is most precious, cruel altars drenched with human gore, and flames consuming the offspring of man's body,—gifts, propitiations, pleadings, sacrifices, without stint and without number,—bear witness to the deep and awful sense of sin which rests upon the heart of the world.

What do we really think about sin—as we see it in others, as we find it in ourselves? And side by side with such a question as that goes another: What is our conception of repentance? We are all acquainted with its philological significance; but what is its actual significance to our inmost conscience? What is our attitude towards those sins which come to us again and again till we know their faces well enough, till they possess for us a degrading—or even, it may be, a fatal—familiarity? What is our attitude towards that one type of sin which is, as it were, our constant companion—which we sometimes seriously try to shake off, but which appears to keep pace with us like the very shadow of ourselves? What is our attitude towards that one particular piece of iniquity which, perhaps in the fierce heat of sudden temptation, or perhaps after cool and deliberate calculation, we committed in past years, and which stands out with such hideous prominence from the midst of a life that often has been far enough from being pure and innocent and unselfish and upright?

As we have grown older, we have become clearer and clearer sighted, and we now see that what we at one time thought little or nothing of was really altogether unworthy of any Christian man or woman. Do not let us be afraid of this truer vision of the past; neither let us dread any sudden opening of the eyes, at some future moment, to what we are now, or to what we have been in the days that are beyond recall. Of course, we may let such a realization overwhelm us, but it is our own fault and folly if we do.

Man, what is this, and why art thou despairing?
God shall forgive thee all but thy despair.

We may awake and see the sins which we have committed thronging about us, just as Robespierre—in the drama that was played some years ago in London—saw in the Conciergerie the ghosts of those whom he had sent to the guillotine. Those spectres may press upon us both on the right hand and on the left; they may come from the days of youth, when we were weak and easily led; or from early manhood or womanhood, when we were wild and reckless, without self-restraint and self-discipline; or from later years, when our conscience had become hardened, and we had made ourselves capable of actions from which aforetime we should have shrunk. Yes; they may come to threaten and appal us. But there is deliverance from them.

(1) The sense of sin is not found everywhere. The Egyptians and Babylonians had their catalogues of sins, but their sinfulness never troubled them as the sinfulness of the Hebrews troubled them. We may almost say that the ancient Greeks had no real conception of sin. The Greeks recognized the existence of vice, certain actions were to them unlovely, disagreeable, mischievous; but the Greek people never felt the burden of their sinfulness. The countrymen of Homer and of Pericles were the lightest hearted of all the peoples of the earth, as joyous and as sunny as the sea which broke into laughter on the shores of their lovely islands. The Romans were far more earnest than the Greeks, but they had no deep consciousness of sin. We can hardly think of Julius Cæsar shedding tears over his transgressions. Rome had her priests and her sacrifices, but her conception of sin had slight influence on either the personal or the national life. Christianity is pre-eminently the religion which develops in its adherents a sense of sin. Buddhism, and Brahminism, and Confucianism, and Zoroastrianism all recognize the existence of evil, and attempt to deal with it in different ways; but in none of these religions is there a recognition of sin in the sense in which Christians use that word.

¶ A genial sense of "camaraderie" was inspired and maintained by sacred dance, song, and simple prayer, and especially by the sacrificial banquet at which the deity and his tribe were imagined as feasting together. And whatever ritual was in vogue

for the purging of the people's sins was external and mechanical merely, accompanied by no call to real repentance, no appeal to the individual conscience.[1]

¶ Nor, when the dying Indian had been induced at last to express a desire for Paradise, was it an easy matter to bring him to a due contrition for his sins; for he would deny with indignation that he had ever committed any.[2]

¶ A sense of darkness and ignorance made the Greek sorrow, a sense of sin and evil the Hebrew sorrow. The Hebrew sorrow expressed itself in three ways—in a passion for forgiveness, in a passion for redemption, and in a passion for life; and these three passions are pointed out by the Baptist in this new phrase which he has coined for the new age, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"[3]

¶ Dale's sense of sin was deep and vivid. Sin—not merely as revealed in speech and conduct, but as that principle of evil within us by which the very springs of life are corrupted; sin, whether ours by inheritance, or through our own defect, or by our mysterious community in the moral life of the race—sin, in all its forms and degrees, he felt to be the most terrible of realities. No one who knew him intimately could fail to perceive it. He sometimes referred, half wonderingly, half sadly, to the experience of a friend of his who once asked him what theologians meant by "original sin":—"I cannot understand what they mean," he said, "I have never been conscious of any inclination to do what I knew to be wrong." The fact of original sin presented no difficulty to Dale. He knew only too well the unremitting energy of moral evil, and the incessant struggle against its malignant power. Altogether apart from any special incentive, he would never have dealt lightly with the baser elements in human character and conduct; and anxiety to avert any moral degeneracy in those who had accepted the new doctrine intensified his natural antipathy to evil. At times his denunciation of sin was overwhelming in its force. He never stormed; but his wrath, as it grew, glowed with passion at a white heat. It swept on in waves of living fire. It seemed to scorch, to shrivel, to consume. And if it was not often that he let indignation break into flame, there was always a certain austerity—it might even be called harshness—in his moral judgment, which strongly contrasted with his charitable temper in dealing with individual

[1] L. R. Farnell, *The Higher Aspects of Greek Religion*, 132.
[2] Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America*, i. 178.
[3] W. W. Peyton.

offenders; though even with them his sternness, when provoked, could be terrible.[1]

(2) It is impossible to have any adequate sense of sin without a great conception of God. It was because the Hebrew prophets saw God to be high and lifted up that they felt themselves to be sinners. I "am but dust and ashes," says Abraham. "Behold, I am vile; I will lay my hand upon my mouth," says Job. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips," says Isaiah. All the great Hebrews, from Abraham to John the Baptist, lie with their faces in the dust, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

¶ Where in any literature will you find a poem like the Fifty-first Psalm? "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me." The man who wrote that is a Shakespeare in the realm of spiritual expression.[2]

(3) The world thinks that the Church makes much ado about little. Men of the world cannot see that sin is terrible, or that it needs to be shunned or feared. Men sometimes confess in a jocose tone that they are sinners; they confess their sinfulness between loud bursts of laughter. One would think from their behaviour that sinning is a joke. Every generation has brought forth its host of writers who have endeavoured to persuade the world that sin is nothing but a trifle, a straw that some happy wind will some day blow away. Or they make it out a form of immaturity, an imperfection, a crudity, a greenness, a rawness, a pardonable ignorance which will certainly be outgrown. "You do not blame the apple tree in the early spring because the blossoms are not full blown. Give the tree sufficient time, and the apples will be forthcoming."

¶ All depends on our maintaining the inviolability of the will; and for finite beings a will is no will which *cannot* choose evil.

[1] *The Life of R. W. Dale*, 314. [2] C. E. Jefferson, *Things Fundamental*, 234.

If —— admits that, but says that the continued rebellion of any is irreconcilable with the triumph of God's will and love, then I say that the *present* rebellion of any is likewise inconsistent with the same. While that awful fact of sin is staring you in the face, you cannot weave theories for the future that will hold water, except by the German dodge of refining sin into a lesser kind of necessary good, which is the very devil.[1]

¶ One night some years ago in a University town there was a meeting of the White Cross Society. The meeting was over, one of the members had argued that sin was not natural, and at the close one of the medical professors, gathering a group of students around him, said, "That's gammon! The sin you have heard of to-night *is* natural," and the students to a man hissed him out of the room.[2]

> I said to Heart, "How goes it?" Heart replied:
> "Right as a Ribstone Pippin!" But it lied.[3]

(4) According to Jesus, there is nothing terrible in the world but sin. It is the thing to be shunned, feared, hated. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better to lose an eye than to do wrong. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better to have no right hand than to do wrong. Beware how you tempt others to sin; it were better that a millstone should be hanged about a man's neck, and that the man should be cast into the midst of the sea, than that he should cause a human being to do wrong. That is not the language which we are apt to use, nor is it the feeling which is in our hearts. Many of us would commit a score of sins, rather than lose an eye or a hand. But to the mind of Jesus no loss which may come to the body is to be compared with the loss which comes to the soul by breaking the law of God. "Joy," He said, "shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." This feeling of Jesus was communicated to His disciples. His Apostles go to work with unflagging earnestness to root out the sins of men. Whenever St. Paul writes of sin, his language becomes terribly earnest and intense. Sin to him is no shadow, it is an awful reality. He speaks to his converts in words which sound like the blast of a bugle. "Put on the whole armour of God,

[1] *Life and Letters of Fenton J. A. Hort*, i. 326.
[2] George Adam Smith, *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 471.
[3] H. Belloc, *Verses*, 81.

that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

¶ It could not have been a trifle that started the great drops of blood from the body of Jesus Christ in Gethsemane, or that caused Him His exceeding sorrow on the tree. Great natures cannot weep blood but on great occasions. There must, then, have been something terrible about this moral putrescence which is called *sin*. It was no speck on the surface; it was poison in the blood. The tones heard at Golgotha are not the harsh tones of vengeance; there is no scream of fury; no thunder of cursing; there is a wail of sorrow, deep, loud, long, as if the very heart of God had broken. It is the agony of love; it is the paroxysm of a lacerated and dying spirit. It was love that had failed in life, determined to succeed in death. It was dying innocence struggling with dead guilt.[1]

2. *The sin of the world.*—The word "world" is one of St. John's words. It appears on almost every page of his writings. It stands out prominently both in his Gospel and in his Epistles. What, then, was his conception of the world? There are two words in Scripture used to denote the world. There is the word "kosmos." This means the world under the condition of space. There is the word "æon," which means the world under the condition of time. The latter word is translated sometimes "age" or "epoch" or "dispensation," and it is this word that is used and never the other when the end of the world is spoken of. But the other word "kosmos" is the word referred to here. What is its meaning? Its first and earliest meaning is the sum total of material things, their order, their beauty, symmetry, law. But this world is never represented as sinful, only as unmoral. Then into this framework of kosmos man is set. It was made for him. It was kept in existence for him, and so the world comes to mean, next, the material universe of which man is the moral centre. Then it comes to be applied to the men themselves, the sum total of humanity who live and move and have their being in this material framework. But man takes the world and uses it without reference to the Giver. He was put into it as a steward, but instead of faithfully recognizing the true owner, he appropriates the proceeds for his own purposes. Hence comes the next idea of the world. It is humanity separated from God. From

[1] J. Parker.

separation the next step is easy. It is hostility. Thus the last stage of the world is humanity separated, hostile, rebellious against God. That is sin. That is the sin of the world.

(1) The view of the Baptist embraces the human race. His words are that the Lamb of God "taketh away the sin of the world"; that is, the whole enormous mass of iniquity which is in the world, which burdens and blights the world; the sin of which original depravity is as it were the root, vicious habits the branches, thoughts, words, and deeds of impiety and injustice the leaves and fruits.

John knew very well the *sin of the nation.* He had seen unreality and formalism in the religious circles of his day, the scandalous life of Herod, and the terrible effect of such examples upon public morality. He had seen the moral indifference of the Herodian, whom nothing could rouse to contend for the principles on which life is based. He had come in close contact with admitted and regretted sin. He had been roused to indignation, to sorrow, moved to pity, knowing that his brother-men had sought for happiness along the paths which end in misery. But from the sin of a nation he rose to a yet more overwhelming thought, which was *the sin of the world.* All the collective evil of mankind; the burden of inherited evil from which our Lord alone is exempt; the vast innumerable multitude of personal sins from the first rebellion at Eden down to the last evil deed which humanity shall commit: the ghastly retinue of the passions and selfishness of mankind.

¶ All holiness and gentleness work for the world's redemption within their appointed field. A refined and loving soul, though without the gifts that attract the attention of the world, takes away the sin of a home or neighbourhood. But the power over men which we describe as greatness extends the influence more widely. The purity and gentleness of Jesus might have been hidden away in the little town of Nazareth, and have been an unseen ripple in the great ocean of the world's affairs. He was, however, not only the Lamb of God, but as He is described elsewhere, "the lion of the tribe of Judah." Like the monarch of the forest, He had strength. He had that power of command over men which, for good or evil, influences the world. His power was acknowledged and proved by the bitterness of His enemies; and when He was lifted up from the earth, He drew the eyes of nations, and became a beacon-light for succeeding

centuries. And to this day His holiness and gentleness are the mightiest power that we know for taking away the sin of the world. It may still be long before the brute powers are dethroned and the reign of humanity is established, but never was the rule of Christ's spirit higher than it is to-day.[1]

(2) Perhaps what appeals more forcibly to the sensitiveness of the present age is the suffering of the world, the burden of the anguish which rests upon mankind. And indeed in its collective mass it is, if viewed apart from Calvary, a terrible enigma. And yet incomparably more awful to a conscience really enlightened by penitence and faith would be the appalling, the overwhelming idea of "the sin of the world." That thought has rested with almost intolerable weight upon some of the saintliest of mankind. It rested that day upon St. John.

There was laughter in my father's hall,
  Mirth in my mother's bower,
When One crept silently up by the wall
  In the dim, dull, twilight hour.

How did he pass the faithful guard
  Who watch both long and late?
Did he steal through the window strongly barred,
  Or slipped he in by the gate?

What is the name of this fearful guest,
  Sorrow or Shame or Sin?
I cannot tell, but I know no rest
  Since his dread form came in.[2]

(3) It is not the *sins* but the *sin* of the world. The sin of the world, of which the various sins are so many branches and manifestations, is the world's apostasy and alienation from the living God; the two great evils connected going into one—that we have forsaken Jehovah, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." And the law of God is one

[1] J. Drummond, *Johannine Thoughts*, 29.
[2] Margaret Blaikie, *Songs by the Way*, 29.

—multitudes of commandments, but one in its principle, its principle being love to God, and love to all created beings for God's sake. It is one, as flowing all from the same essential purity, justice, and universal moral good—the Divine nature.

¶ In what does the sin of the world essentially consist? It consists in omitting God from its life. It consists in forgetting, ignoring, denying, defying God. Get hold of that truth, and never let it go. The Bible never wavers in representing this as the essence and origin of all sin. We sometimes speak of sin as drunkenness, or lust, or murder, or theft, or covetousness, or lying. These are rather crimes or vices. They are related to sin as the fruit is related to the tree, or the plant is related to the root. They are not so much sin as the last fruitage of sin. Sin itself lies deeper. It lies in "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."[1]

¶ Says Drummond: The whole of a man's nature is built up, I might say, of cells. One after another, good and bad, all things have become part of him. His sins have made *sin* a part of him. That unkind thing you say or do makes you an unkind character. That selfish thing you do makes you selfish, pure and holy and noble thoughts are turned out, and you become an animal. Paul says, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this dead body?" Chained as they were in those dark dungeons of the East, if one prisoner died he was left chained to the man next him. . . . "This dead body"—it was Sin. But, gentlemen, we are making dead bodies with our own hands and lives: cell by cell we become dead. Sin is a part of one, and the end of these things is death, and all of a sudden some morning we awake and say, "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this dead body?"[2]

¶ Modern masters of science are much impressed with the need of beginning all inquiry with a fact. The ancient masters of religion were quite equally impressed with that necessity. They began with the fact of sin—a fact as practical as potatoes. Whether or not man could be washed in miraculous waters, there was no doubt at any rate that he wanted washing. But certain religious leaders in London, not mere Materialists, have begun in our day not to deny the highly disputable water, but to deny the indisputable dirt. Certain new theologians dispute original sin, which is the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved.[3]

[1] R. Waddell, *Behold the Lamb of God*, 123.

[2] *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 478.

[3] G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*.

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
See reasons and reasons; this, to begin:
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart
At the head of a lie—taught Original Sin,
The Corruption of Man's Heart.[1]

II.

The Lamb of God.

1. In the conception of Jesus as the Lamb of God, to be offered in expiation of human transgressions, the religious genius of the Baptist reaches (if the expression may be used) its high-water mark. So intense was his appreciation of the real significance of moral evil that he saw that while the utmost a guilty soul can do is to repent, yet more is necessary in the counsels of God if forgiveness is to become a full possibility. There must be the actual removal of human guilt through the self-oblation of the Christ. It was a great venture of thought, even although there was that in the literature of the Old Testament which pointed the way. Here and there in Israel there must have been natures—Simeon's seems to have been one of them—which were capable of recognizing the justice and force of such an anticipation; but it was very different with the almost universal sentiment of the nation. St. John stood nearly by himself in his realization of the profound truth. Flesh and blood had not revealed it unto him.

2. It has sometimes been asked and debated, To which of the lambs of sacrifice, ordained in the Old Testament, did the Baptist here refer; to which did he liken that immaculate Lamb, who, being without spot and stain, should take away our spots and stains, and bear the collective sin of the world? Did St. John allude to the daily lamb of the morning and evening sacrifice? or was it to the lamb of the passover, commemorating the old deliverance from Egypt? or was it to some other of the many lambs which were prescribed in the law of Moses, as a portion of the ritual of sacrifice appointed there? The question is surely a superfluous one. The reference is not special, but comprehensive. It is to none of these in particular, being indeed

[1] Browning, *Gold Hair*.

to them all. They severally set forth in type and in figure some part of that which He fulfilled in substance and in life; in Him, not now a lamb of men, but the Lamb of God, being at length fulfilled to the uttermost the significant word of Abraham, "God will provide himself a lamb."

(1) One thing that was associated with the lamb in the sacrifices of which it was the centre was *innocence.* Innocence belongs conceivably to two stages of life. We speak of the innocence of a child. We do not mean, if we understand our words, that he is free from sin. We mean that he has not yet actually done wrong. But in the case of Christ, we mean something more than that.

¶ As children emerge into manhood, innocence passes, and it is one of the sore regrets of life that it comes back no more. You remember the beautiful sonnet in which Charles Lamb utters his grief for the loss of innocence—

> We were two pretty babes; the youngest she—
> The youngest, and the loveliest far (I ween),
> And innocence her name. The time has been
> We two did love each other's company;
> Time was we two had wept to have been apart.
> But when by show of seeming good beguiled,
> I left the garb and manners of a child,
> And my first love for man's society,
> Defiling with the world my virgin heart—
> My lov'd companion dropt a tear, and fled,
> And hid in deepest shades her awful head.
> Beloved, who shall tell me, where thou art,
> In what delicious Eden to be found?
> That I may seek thee, the wide world round.

Now, that was the test that Christ never needed. Why? Because He never lost innocence. He went down among the sins and temptations of life, but He came out of them pure and unsoiled. We call tried innocence holiness. Christ was sinless. That is the marvel of this Lamb of God. The animal was innocent, but it was an untried and unmoral innocence. This Lamb is not only innocent, but also perfectly holy.

¶ Make no mistake as to what we call by the name of virtue. It is the generous force of life. Virtue is not an innocent. We adore Divine innocence, but it is not of all ages and all conditions; it is not ready for all encounters. It protects itself

against the snares of nature and of man. Innocence fears everything, virtue fears nothing. Virtue can, if it be necessary, plunge with a sublime impurity into the depths of misery to console it, into every vice to recover it. It knows what the great human task is, and that it is sometimes necessary to soil one's hands.[1]

(2) The second point about the lamb was its *gentleness*. It is the perfect type of meek, uncomplaining suffering. Christ's gentleness was wonderful. It was wonderful because it was not the outcome either of necessity or of weakness. A person is sometimes tolerant because he is morally indifferent. He manifests no anger or passion because he does not feel or see wrong. But with Christ it was not so. His gentleness was not the outcome of insensibility, of a mere ignorant good-nature. His holiness made it impossible for Him to be ignorant of sin, made it inevitable that He should see sin with clearer eyes than the sinner himself. Neither was it born from necessity. People are sometimes gentle because they must. They endure and suffer in silence because they say, "Well, we cannot help it; it is best to be quiet and resigned." That was not Christ's case either. The assumption of the New Testament is that Christ could help it; that He had only to speak, and legions of angels would leap to His command.

¶ This beautiful figure reveals the kind of impression which Jesus made by His simple presence. The lamb is an emblem of innocence and gentleness, as Spenser says:

> And by her in a line a milke-white lamb she led
> So pure and innocent, as that same lambe,
> She was in life and every vertuous lore.

Innocence in a moral agent is not the mere absence of guilt, but reaches the positive rank of purity, or, higher still, of holiness. This holiness in Himself and gentleness towards others marked Jesus out as God's own Lamb, a man Divine in purity and love, and therefore the "beloved Son" of God. So much might well be apparent to the searching glance of sympathy and a prophet's power of reading the heart. But the succeeding words disclose a deeper insight, and give utterance to a grand truth. Holiness and gentleness are the redeeming powers of the world, and these two great powers have wrought in Christendom from that day to

[1] Anatole France, *On Life and Letters*, 291.

this. The men and women who have lifted the burden of the world's sin have always been the saints who have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, or, in less figurative language, have imbibed His spirit of holiness and gentleness, and with their own peace have lulled the storms of passion, and with their own purity have sweetened the fountains of life. The holiness of Christ awakens the sense of sin, while we see that that is the true life of man, and our own hearts look black against that bright illumination. And then His gentleness saves us from despair. Were there nothing but condemnation and scorn, no sympathy, no tender pity, we could not bear that holiness, and could only abandon ourselves as lost. But when it comes with such soothing and loving accents, we are drawn within its folds, and purified in its purity. "Thy gentleness has made me great." The maxim of the world, and too often of the Church, has been that violence and revenge take away the sin of the world. But it is not so. These only harden and degrade, whereas love melts the heart, and gives a new and conquering motive in an answering love. In this soul-subduing love we recognize that which is heavenly and eternal. The Lamb of God manifests the holiness and the gentleness of God. And so our fear is cast out; and, lowly and contrite, we draw near, and are folded in the bosom of our Father, and receive the grace of sonship.[1]

A lamb is innocent and mild
  And merry on the soft green sod;
And Jesus Christ, the Undefiled,
  Is the Lamb of God:
Only spotless He
Upon His Mother's knee;
White and ruddy, soon to be
Sacrificed for you and me.

Nay, lamb is not so sweet a word,
  Nor lily half so pure a name;
Another name our hearts hath stirred,
  Kindling them to flame:
"Jesus" certainly
Is music and melody:
Heart with heart in harmony
Carol we and worship we.[2]

¶ When the great Father came to unveil Himself in the person of His Son, it was a life of Divine gentleness that came to

[1] J. Drummond, *Johannine Thoughts*, 28. [2] C. G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 158.

earth. Jesus was the incarnation of gentleness. When He was reviled He reviled not again. There never was a life so mild and yet so firm and strong. Munkacsy, in his famous picture of "Christ before Pilate," has thrown this Divine trait into the face and figure of Christ. All around is strife, hatred, unrest, but in the centre stands the King of majesty and love with the gentleness of another world upon Him. They spit upon Him, they taunt Him, they crown Him with thorns, but He is still the "Lamb of God." Even on the cross this greatness abides, as the Saviour reaches the sublimest and Divinest moment of His passion with the prayer: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."[1]

(3) But what was in St. John's mind when he uttered these words was not so much the character of the Lamb—innocence, holiness, sinlessness, gentleness—it was *death*. It is beyond all doubt that he connected Christ with the sacrifices of the old dispensation. Here at last they found their fulfilment. Here at last the type was completed in the antitype. The Lamb is no unwilling victim. That was the weak spot in all preceding sacrifices. The creature went to death reluctantly. It was forced to its doom. Therefore its death in itself had no moral significance. But the remarkable thing about the death of the Lamb of God is that it is purely voluntary. From very early in His career Christ saw where He was going. It was no blind groping that ended accidentally or necessarily in the cross. He carried the cross on His heart long before it was laid on His shoulders.

¶ There are various types of death. There is the death of the good, the death when the soul surrenders itself into the hands of God. There is another kind of death. It is the death of Gordon of Khartum, the death of the hero. There is a third. Literature has never forgotten Socrates in the Agora of Athens. It is a beautiful scene. The Grecian sage has been sentenced to death on a false charge. He is to be his own executioner, and the great old man talks calmly to his disciples, settles his earthly affairs, says good-bye to one after another, then takes the cup of poison and drinks it, and all is over. Or yet, once more, yonder in a Chinese town a Chinese Christian sinks beneath the stones of the mob. "Are you sorry?" asks the missionary. "Sorry! Oh no," he says. "How glad! Only sorry that I have done so little for

[1] J. I. Vance, *Royal Manhood*, 53.

Jesus." These are the types of death as the world gives them. They are the deaths of the good, the heroic, the sage, the martyr. Christ's was not like any of these. Or rather it takes up and comprehends all these. There is one thing common to them all. They had to be. But Christ's was predicted. Christ's was foreseen. Christ's was deliberately accepted. Death did not choose Him. He chose death. He met it at the trysting-place where He and not death determined, and He went to the cross, though legions of angels were waiting to bear Him away from it. That makes His death unique in the world.[1]

3. He is the Lamb *of God.* For He is provided by God. But the Lamb of God does not mean merely a Lamb appointed or ordained by God. The words have reference to an abiding element in God Himself. The Lamb of God belongs as much to the eternal essence of God as His glory, His righteousness, His truth, and His love. And for us, and perhaps for all worlds, this is the most wonderful and entrancing name of all. The highest praise we can offer to God is to sing, "Worthy is the Lamb!"

Put emphasis on the words, "of God." There you strike the distinctive feature of this sacrifice, and of the religion which it created. The difference between Christianity and all other religions lies in these two words. In other religions man provides his sacrifice for his god. In Christianity God provides the sacrifice for man. Christ comes forth out of the heart of God. Shall we not indeed say He is God? Here is where a devastating error has crept in. Men have talked and written as if somehow God and Christ were divided, as if somehow Christ propitiated God, and won Him the mercy. Nowhere in Scripture is there any such statement made. It is a heathen importation. Men are heard saying, "Oh, God will do nothing for us. Our only hope is in Christ." What a dreadful travesty of the truth! God and Christ are one in this supreme work. The Father sends the Son, and the Son issues forth gladly out of the Father's heart. The two are an absolute unity in working out man's salvation. Here is the everlasting proof of the love of God. Men say God is loving, and therefore He does not need to be propitiated. The New Testament says, "God is love," and therefore He Himself provides a propitiation.

[1] R. Waddell.

III.

The Lamb and the Sin.

1. "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" What precisely do these words mean? In the margin of the ordinary version we read, "beareth away" the sin of the world; and in that of the Revised Version it is given simply, "beareth the sin." But perhaps the full significance of the word is to be had by the union of both the textual and the marginal renderings, for the term in the original is the equivalent of a Hebrew word, which sometimes denotes the bearing of the punishment of sin, and sometimes the making of expiation for sin; and so, as Alford remarks, "it will in our verse bear either of these meanings, or both conjoined, for if the Lamb is to suffer the burden of the sins of the world, and is to take away sin and its guilt by expiation, this result must be accomplished by the offering of himself."

(1) The simplest meaning of the word is to *lift*, and this is also the simplest consciousness of liberation from sin. Man, unable to free himself from the fatal burden, feels it lifted from heart and conscience by the redeeming hand of God. Trust in God is not the product of profound doctrinal understanding, but the expression of the felt need of casting our infirmity and sin on the strength and grace of God. The beginning of the soul's redemption is the discovery that we ourselves cannot overcome sin, but that we can safely leave it all with the boundless love and mercy of God.

(2) The second phase in the meaning of the word is to *bear*. The Divine Saviour who "lifts" the sin from our aching hearts bears it on His own. This is the substance of the great act and process of atonement, which is the centre of the Christian faith, and in its inexhaustible import both the joy and the despair of the human understanding. It is related, on the one hand, to the inviolable righteousness and truth and love of God, and, on the other, to the vital union of the Divine life with the life of humanity. It is therefore at one and the same time the fulfilment of the Divine righteousness and the working of redemptive energy in the lives of men. The Cross is not an isolated thing,

but the sacrificial life of the Son of God interwoven with the red fibres of the human spirit.

(3) The last phase of meaning in the word is to *bear away.* This ends the succession in the line of grace. The Saviour lifts the sin of the world; He bears the sin of the world; He bears away the sin of the world. The beginning of redemption is liberation from the weight of sin; the completion of redemption is everlasting separation from the power of sin. The Sin-bearer bears away our sin, and we are thrall to it no longer. It can never return to condemn us. He has borne it past all the measureless abysses of death and Hades, and overwhelmed it in the glory of His resurrection. This is the salvation of our God. We are risen with the Risen Christ. Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

2. The saving power of the Cross of Christ is no theory; it is a fact. The sign of shame and guilt has become the sign of faith and hope. The instrument of torture and death, defiled and loathed and hated, has been lifted out of the gloom and horror of sin, transfigured, crowned with honour and victory, and planted for ever on the hill of salvation. The eyes of the world turn to the Cross of Christ. Fainting, despairing, dying, bound in the prison-houses of crime, crushed under the load of transgressions, parched and burning with the fever of life, from every place of sorrow and suffering and darkness, the lost children of men are looking to the Cross with speechless longing, and feeling its blessed power with unutterable joy.

¶ Do you want to know how it is possible? What if I could not tell? You want to go by the cable cars. Can you explain the force that draws them? Will you wait until you understand the nature of steam and the machinery it uses before you trust yourself to them? You want to use the telegraph to send a message of sympathy or a sum of money to a relative who is in sorrow or want. Do you comprehend the nature of the electric fluid that is waiting to run with your message, and will you delay sending it until you do? You are hungry or thirsty, dying for want of food or drink. Here are both. Will you refuse them till you comprehend the chemical constituents of water, or the means by which the grain from the hillside is turned into the bread that delivers from starvation? Is the experience of others, hundreds of thousands, not enough to assure you in venturing

although you do not understand all? "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" That is the Gospel. That is the good news from heaven. It comes as an offer, as a gift. It is ours only to put aside prejudice, and unwillingness, and indifference, and embrace the offer and receive the gift. This is what amazed the Son of God, that men dying should refuse the means of life, that men under the guilt and bondage of sin should decline deliverance. Their unbelief filled Him with dismay. Let it not be said of any of us as of those of old, "He marvelled at their unbelief." For unbelief seals us up in sin, and delivers us to the death eternal, from which the Son of God came to set us free.[1]

3. How the death of Christ upon the Cross is an atonement for the sins of the whole world is a complete mystery to us; but that it is so we know from revelation. All sin, upon repentance, is made as though it had never been by virtue of this sacrifice; it is cancelled, done away with. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." What an astonishing result! What a miracle of power and mercy! Here is accomplished all that man has yearned for, and so ineffectually striven after—the compensation, the atonement for sin. His wish is accomplished, though he cannot understand how. The atonement, when it has come, is a mystery; but he knows that it is made, that something has been done in heaven by which sin has been cancelled. He knows that there has been a great reconciliation, a great restoration. He does not see this, but he apprehends it by faith.

The various aspects of this mysterious atoning sacrifice emerge in constant succession throughout this Gospel, even before the narrative of the Passion begins. To Nathanael, in those earliest days of all, is whispered the mysterious prophecy of a new Bethel vision. The Person of the Son of Man is to be a fresh medium of access, a new ladder of communication between earth and an opened heaven. To Nicodemus the Son of Man is revealed as the antitype of Moses' brazen serpent, lifted up for the saving of those who will look to Him. Meanwhile a still more mysterious utterance has been given to those scandalized by His fierce cleansing of the Temple courts, an utterance which not even the most intimate understood till long afterwards. But St. John is

[1] R. Waddell, *Behold the Lamb of God*, 134.

determined that his readers shall understand it, there, in its place, and shall know that thus early the Master was conscious of that supreme trial through which His body had to pass, and of His own inner power to transform death into victory. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

The same thought again underlies His clear consciousness of the murderous intention of the Jews, recorded in the earlier contests from the fifth chapter to the eighth, and is concentrated in the teaching of the sixth chapter and the tenth.

The sacrificial language of the Fourth Gospel is matched, as we might expect, by that of the First Epistle, here as elsewhere fulfilling the function of an inspired commentary on the writer's earlier work. Thus, in the first chapter, it is declared that the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin those who in communion with Him are walking in the light. In the second, "Jesus Christ the righteous" is set forth as at once Advocate and Propitiation concerning the sins, not merely of a limited circle of privileged ones, but "of the whole world." Later on in the same chapter, and again in those that follow it, we are told of a mutual indwelling, wherein the believer attains to that mystic union with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which is the ultimate end of all sacrifice—that true and only eternal Life; so that we are prepared for the clear teaching of the final chapter, where, in the uncompromising language of the beloved disciple, it is proclaimed that "He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life."

¶ I have felt that to understand the Passion one must be one's self, as it were, God infinite, and able to comprehend the love and the agony of an infinite nature. This sight, of all I look upon, alone has power to arrest my heart. It seems foreign to the order in which I am at present moving, yet it is friendly, familiar to some inner instinct, as if it were native to a kingdom in which I had once moved.[1]

4. There are, however, certain principles which we can hardly mistake, if we listen either to the voice of Scripture, or to the voice of the Church, or to the voice of our own moral reason—voices which speak in true concord more frequently than is sometimes supposed.

[1] Dora Greenwell.

(1) The first principle which is thus guaranteed to us is that the Death of Christ was not only efficacious by way of example, or because of its influence on the minds of those who think of it, but objectively, in itself, and in relation to the law of righteousness. It is quite true that it is the supremest example of self-sacrifice that the world has witnessed, quite true that the message of the Cross has had power to convince of sin and to lead men to holiness, solely from the pathetic pleading of the love of which it tells. But it is impossible to reconcile the words of Scripture with a theory which goes no farther than this, or to understand the moral necessity for the awful victory of the Cross, if nothing more than this be true.

(2) On the other hand, the word "punishment" is not used in the New Testament of the Death of Christ. His Atonement is never there described as a punishment of the innocent instead of the guilty, though it has been so described by careless readers of Scripture. That is a conception which is repugnant to all our notions of justice, and it is foreign to the teaching of the Gospels. Punishment can be justly inflicted only on the offender himself. Certainly it does not follow that only the guilty suffer in consequence of their sin. Every day's experience convinces us of the contrary. The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children; "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." But that is not to say that the Almighty punishes the children for what was no fault of theirs; it is rather to say that we are all linked together by bonds so close in one great brotherhood that, "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." It may be said that this makes no difference as to the pain entailed upon the innocent; but surely it makes a wide difference in our conception of the justice of the Supreme Orderer of men's lives, whether we regard Him as the immediate Author of that pain, or whether we look on it as an inevitable consequence of the unity of mankind and of the warfare against good inspired by the wayward wills of men. To ask that it should be otherwise is to ask that man should not be man, should have been created other than he is. The innocent is not *punished* instead of the guilty; and so it is not said in the New Testament that Christ was punished instead of man. It *is* said that He suffered because of man, for the sake of man,

that the sin which man commits every hour issued in His Passion.

¶ Ghastliest of all misconceptions ever put before this city or any other is the assertion that the doctrine of the Atonement implies, first, that an innocent being is made guilty in the sense of being personally blameworthy; and, secondly, that that innocent being is punished in the sense of suffering pain for personal ill-desert. Both these propositions all clear thought discards, all religious science condemns. We have no doctrine of the Atonement which declares that personal demerit is laid upon our Lord, or that, in the strict sense of the word, He suffered punishment—that is, pain inflicted for personal blameworthiness. He had no personal blameworthiness. He was an innocent being, as He always will be; and never did, can, or will suffer punishment, in the strict sense of the word.[1]

(3) Once more, the Death of Jesus is not represented in the New Testament as the cause of the love of God. It is its effect, its outcome. It is a parody of the Gospel to speak of Christ's having, as it were, purchased by His Death God's love for man. For "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."

¶ I recollect particularly well an answer he gave once in private conversation to the question, "Do you believe that the sacrifice of Christ is the essential and basal thing in the Christian religion?" The interrogator desired an answer, Yes or No. It was at the time when Drummond's position was being assailed from almost every quarter. I shall not soon forget the slow, deliberate reply: "Then my answer must be No." The questioner remarked that it was satisfactory to have such a plain answer. But there was in store for him something which probably made matters plainer still: "If I may venture a supplementary remark," said Drummond, "I would say that in my opinion the sacrifice of Christ is a part of the very essence of Christianity, but the basis of Christianity is the eternal love of God."[2]

(4) And, lastly, such a conception as that of a Martyr Prophet suffering in innocence instead of sinners who had to share in his sorrow and his pain would be demoralizing to man himself. It would cut at the root of personal responsibility. But the doctrine of the Incarnation has been only half learnt if

[1] Joseph Cook, *Monday Lectures*, i. 151.

[2] George Adam Smith, *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 335.

we have not understood that Christ claimed to be, not only in word, but in fact, the *Representative* and the *Recapitulation* of all men. It was in the name of the race whose nature He assumed that He confessed the guilt of sin, on their behalf that He suffered the inevitable consequence of sin. He "tasted death for every man." He drank the cup to the dregs. Even alienation from the Divine love was felt by Him at last. "My God," He cried, "why hast thou forsaken me?" Herein was the law of righteousness fulfilled.

¶ Writing to Westcott, Hort says: I entirely agree with what you say on the Atonement, having for many years believed that "the absolute union of the Christian (or rather, of man) with Christ Himself" is the spiritual truth of which the popular doctrine of substitution is an immoral and material counterfeit.[1]

[1] *Life and Letters of Fenton J. A. Hort*, i. 430.

Personal Service.

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Personal Service.

One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus.—John i. 40-42.

According to St. John's narrative, Andrew and John (who characteristically does not name himself in the narrative) were the first men who heard and responded to the Master's call, the first whom He enlisted in His little cohort of disciples. They had previously been followers of John the Baptist; but one day as Christ passed by they heard that prophet speak of Him as the Lamb of God, and they looked into His face and felt some wonderful attraction drawing them to Him, and all uninvited they followed and abode with Him one day. What Christ did with them and what He said on that day we know not, but it removed every doubt from their minds if any doubt had lingered there. It was a day of revelation, a day of grace, the most wonderful and the happiest day that these men had yet known, for they had found the Saviour of the world.

And then we have this incident recorded. Andrew had no sooner made his great discovery, than he burned to impart the secret to others. Quickly therefore he sought his own brother Simon and passed on the glad tidings—"We have found the Christ," and "he brought him to Jesus." Here, then, we have to deal with (1) a great discovery, (2) a great enthusiasm kindled by that discovery, and (3) a great service accomplished as the result of the enthusiasm.

¶ This is one of the famous personal work chapters. There are three "findeths" in it. Andrew findeth his brother Peter. That was a great find. John in his modesty does not speak of it, but in all likelihood he findeth James *his* brother. Jesus findeth Philip, and Philip in turn findeth Nathanael, the guileless man.[1]

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service.* 27.

I.

A Great Discovery.

"We have found the Messiah."

1. It was a great day in the life of Andrew when he uttered these words. It was a great day also in the life of the race, for he announced to his brother, Peter, a discovery fraught with importance far beyond his own comprehension.

(1) "We have *found*." They had been looking for Him. The Jews were the nation of hope. Both Andrew and Peter, we may be sure, had heard of the Messiah, the hope of Israel, all their lives. From the earliest antiquity, down through the centuries of the tragic, chequered, strange career of this extraordinary people, there had presented itself, with varying degrees of distinctness, the hope of a Coming One who would be the source of great, although for many centuries undefined, blessings. They had been taught as children, as young men, to put the precious promises of Scripture together, just as nowadays family treasures are taken out and scanned, and arranged and re-arranged, and put back again, from time to time. These promises were the splendid inheritance of the great Jewish family, carried by it everywhere in its sufferings — carried by it throughout the civilized world; and the Galilean peasants, like all others of the race of Israel, felt that they were ennobled by having a share in this great possession. How much that we cannot even understand, in this age of the world, was gathered into those pregnant words: "We have found the Messiah."

(2) "The *Messiah* (which is, being interpreted, Christ)." What did Andrew mean when he said "Christ"? In the thought of the best men of that time the word "Christ" set forth a Heaven-commissioned Prince, the Deliverer of the oppressed people, who should lead His followers to dignity, freedom, and happiness, and in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. This indeed Christ fulfilled, though not in the way Andrew imagined when he ran to Peter with his great discovery. For to the popular conception of the Christ our Lord added the momentous fact that the Messianic goal was to be reached by suffering, humiliation, and death, and that His supreme duty as the

Anointed of God was to give Himself up for the race that rejected Him.

(3) How did Andrew find out Jesus to be the Messiah? There is no reason to think that Jesus told him so. The more carefully we study our Lord's own words about Himself, the more convinced we shall be that He made no such revelation to an inquiring disciple at this early period. He had seen no miracles to convince him, for it is not till the next chapter that we hear of Christ's first miracle. As far as we can judge, every sign of outward power was wanting; for all he could see, Jesus might be the weakest and the most helpless of mankind. What was it then that led him to speak so confidently to Peter? Surely it must have been, first, the effect of Christ's unutterable goodness; and, secondly, that of Christ's inward power, the power of spirit over spirit. Good men, no doubt, as we commonly call men good, he had seen and known before, as almost all of us have done; but here was One whose deep and perfect goodness made Andrew feel as if he were in the presence of God Himself. His own heart was sound and right enough to know the true marks of One come from God.

(4) But when Andrew spoke thus, he knew little of the real Christ. During the next three years he was to be continually finding Christ. He found Him anew in the Sermon on the Mount. He grew larger to his thought as he saw Him heal the sick, teach the inquiring, forgive the sinning. He grew still mightier as he watched Him feed the thousands, still the storm, and raise the dead. And the Christ in the upper room, in Gethsemane, and on Calvary, towered still higher above the Christ to whom he introduced his brother, and was in turn surpassed by the Christ of the Resurrection morning and the Ascension Mount. It is a red-letter day in any man's life when he finds Christ, but that is only the beginning of his religious life. From that point we "follow on to know the Lord."

2. To-day our Lord is living and working among us, revealing His glory and manifesting His power, to a far greater degree than when He trod the plains of Galilee, or taught in the Temple courts. But of this the majority of men are little conscious. The need of our times is for men and women who can say with

the conviction of Andrew, "We have found the Christ." Amidst the perplexities of our modern life, there is a cry for those who can speak with certainty of Divine things. It was the peerless personality of the Son of God that first attracted Andrew, and made him declare to Peter the discovery he had made. And the same attraction is operating to-day. Men are not won by beliefs about Christ, but by Christ Himself.

(1) If we would find Christ, we must be looking for Him, and preparing for Him. God taught His own chosen people for whole generations. He taught them *about* the Messiah, who He would be, what He would do, preparing by His messengers the way before Him; and the consequence of all that steady, systematic teaching was that, when the fulness of the time was come, and one brother said to another, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write," they had not to ask who was meant; they took all their old religious knowledge and religious teaching in their hand and went to Jesus, and found Him to be all that they had learnt He would be. And so with our teaching of religious truth; we teach the history of Christ, and His sermons and His parables and His miracles; and we teach, laboriously perhaps, and in the sweat of our brow, the meaning of His Word and of His Sacraments. It is not labour lost. When the fire from heaven descends upon the sacrifice to consume it, it does so all the more readily because the prophet had previously prepared the altar, and set the wood in order, and laid the sacrifice on the wood.

(2) But we must not be content to know about Christ. We must come into personal contact with Him. We must be in the house with Him, we must learn to know Him as the Son of God and the Lamb of God—as that One who came from His Father to be our Brother, to share our nature and to bear our sins and to take us back to God as His Father and our Father, His God and our God—a Friend in sickness and sorrow and death, who points us through death to life eternal. This is the one great discovery, compared with which all other inventions are shortlived opiates of an hour—a little ease on the road to death.

(3) Having recognized the Master when we are brought face to face with Him, we must trust Him as Andrew did. Possibly these early disciples may have thought that, having "found

Christ," the rest was easy and secure; that the new Kingdom of great David's greater Son would present no difficulties, either to flesh and blood or to mind or spirit; that, having found and recognized and honoured the King, there was nothing to follow but position and privilege, and glory such as the Kingdom could and would liberally supply. If this was their thought, they were quickly to be undeceived. The King, though personally dearer to them every day, seemed every day to become more mysterious and unintelligible, and His Kingdom more disappointing and more remote. If He began to tell them about His coming Kingdom, He spoke in parables which they could not understand. If He showed evidence of His superhuman power, it seemed to be His policy to restrain the publication of those miraculous proofs as much as possible. When they suggested that an exhibition of His wrath in the way of punishment might be a warning to His opponents, He rebuked their ignorance of the very spirit of His Kingdom. When they expected Him to be telling them of coming triumph, He could speak only of persecution and suffering and death, until the uncontrollable "Be it far from thee" broke from the lips of their scandalized spokesman. What, then, was the charm, what was the bond, which held the Master and followers together? We answer without hesitation, it was their personal love of the Christ whom they had found. This was what made all disappointment at His want of success and all perplexity as to His doctrine equally unable to break up their little society. They did not pretend to understand His methods or His objects, but when He laid before them one of the hardest and most difficult of His doctrines, that which caused many of His disciples to go back, and walk no more with Him, Peter, answering for the Apostles, could neither turn back nor yet pretend to say that he understood the difficult matter in question; but in all the helplessness of a constraining love, with all the confidence of such a plenary devotion as has no other choice and wishes for no other, he put the seal on his former declaration, "We have left all, and followed thee," by adding to it, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

(4) If we can say "We have found the Messiah," it is now, as

of old, enough. John in the desert, Andrew on the morrow after meeting the Redeemer, did not look like the men who were to initiate nothing less than the spiritual conquest of the world. But one truth, seriously believed and proclaimed with the accents of sincerity, will go a great way with any single soul. If, indeed, we have found the Messiah, not merely in a literature, not merely as an explanation of existing institutions, not merely as the centre of much thought and activity in this our time and day, not merely as an historical personage that must needs be recognized by intelligent men,—if we have found Him for ourselves, found Him as a still living friend, found Him in our prayers, found Him in our Bibles, found Him in our efforts to conquer deep-seated evil within us, found Him in our intercourse with His living servants, found Him in the appointed Sacrament of His love,—if we have found Him as the pardoner of sin and as the conqueror of sin, then we have motives enough and to spare for working for the evangelization of others, for bringing all whom we can to that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, to such ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there may be no place left either for error in religion or for viciousness in life.

3. Society must find Christ. The conception of Christ as the Saviour of individuals only is insufficient for the fulfilling of prophecy or the solution of historic problems. The institutions of men must be saved as truly as individual souls. The Christian design for the world is not an anarchy of good individuals. And it is as society finds Christ that it rejoices in the exhilarating pulsations of a diviner life than the older dispensations ever dreamed of. Modern civilization, so far as it is virtuous, philanthropic, and high-principled, is the result of Andrew's discovery. And one of the great needs of our age is to extend the beneficent influence of this discovery. The spirit of Christ claims dominion over all life, and the principle of Christ's own life must be the principle of the home, the shop, the school, the court, and in the work of every department of our many-sided activities. It is as men realize this, and practise it, that the time is hastened when the new Jerusalem shall descend out of heaven from God, having peace for its walls, righteousness for its foundations, and love for its law.

¶ There is a great deal of good talk these days about regenerating society. It used to be that men talked about "reaching the masses." Now the other putting of it is commoner. It is helpful talk whichever way it is put. The Gospel of Jesus is to affect all society. It *has* affected all society, and is to do so more and more. But the thing to mark keenly is this, the key to the mass is the man. The way to regenerate society is to start on the individual. The law of influence through personal contact is too tremendous to be grasped. You influence one man and you have influenced a group of men, and then a group around each man of the group, and so on endlessly. Hand-picked fruit gets the first and best market. The keenest marksmen are picked for the sharpshooters' corps.[1]

II.

A Great Enthusiasm.

"He first findeth his own brother Simon."

Andrew does not dream of keeping his great discovery to himself. His first thought is to tell it to his brother Simon. He is full of it—can think or talk of nothing else. His eye flashes, his face shines, his voice rings with the music of it. "Simon, we have found Christ."

¶ I like greatly the motto of the Salvation Army. It must have been born for those workers in the warm heart of the mother of the Army, Catherine Booth. That mother explains much of the marvellous power of that organization. Their motto is, "*Saved to Serve.*"[2]

1. There is no joy known to human hearts so glorious, so imperative—breaking down all strongholds and through all restraints—as the joy of a heart in its first gladness in finding the Lord and knowing the forgiveness of sins. As Morley Punshon, the famous English preacher, said, there was joy in the breast of the sage of Syracuse when he shouted aloud his glad "Eureka" in the hearing of the people who deemed him mad; there was joy in the soul of Sir Isaac Newton when the first conception of the law of gravitation burst upon his thought as he sat under his orchard tree; there was joy in the heart of Columbus in that moment of triumph over doubt and mutiny, when the tiny land-birds settled

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 29. [2] *Ibid.* 141.

upon the sails of his vessel, bearing upon their timid wings the welcomes of the new world; there is joy for the gold-finder, when he sees the precious ore shining in his gold-pan; joy for children when new marvels of the world open on their vision; joy for the poet when he sends through the world a glad thought that stirs the pulse of mankind; but none of these can compare with the joy of the ransomed sinner who can clasp his brother's hand and say, "Come, brother, we have found the Lord."

¶ I remember well how I used to pray for joy. I was told that a Christian must be joyful. I prayed and prayed, and I must say I did not get it. Why not? Because it does not come by prayer alone. It may come that way, but not alone. I used to think that joy was kept in lumps—packets which were stored up and then doled out—or injected like morphia—and that if I prayed a lump would come. This is a material conception that many hold. They want virtues and graces, and they set-to and pray. They pray for rest, peace, love, joy, and they hope these will drop from heaven and stay with them for ever. But these are *Fruits*. How can you have *Fruits* without *Branches*? Where are your branches to bear fruit, where is your blossom to precede it? What's the use of a lump of joy if there are no branches? Now, gentlemen, look up in your Bibles and find out how to get joy; find the *cause* of joy. Work by the law you know of as "cause and effect." Joy is an effect, find the cause. There is one, just as surely as you have a cause for toothache. Turn to the fifteenth of John, and there you will read the parable of the Vine in the words of Jesus. He tells His disciples about the tree and its branches, and then He tells them the "why" of these things:—"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." That is the end of the parable—the cause of joy, something of which the effect is joy. Joy comes of a great law. But what is the condition? Go home and look and see. *It is to do good.* Abide in Christ and bring forth fruit, then comes the joy, and you can't help yourself. You don't make the joy. It simply follows after a certain cause, and I defy any man in this hall to go off and do something for somebody, comfort them, help them, any one whom you may meet—I say, I defy him to do that and not come back happier and full of joy.[1]

2. Andrew started *at once* to spread the good tidings. The day after his conversion was the day in which he became a soul-

[1] Drummond, in Smith's *Life of Henry Drummond*, 496.

winner. How instinctive and natural the impulse is, when a man has found Jesus Christ, to tell some one else about Him. Nobody said to Andrew, "Go and look for your brother"; and yet, as soon as he had fairly realized the fact that this Man standing before him was the Messiah, though the evening seems to have come, he hurried away to find his brother, and share with him the glad conviction. That is always the case. If a man has any real depth of conviction, he cannot rest till he tries to share it with somebody else. Why, even a dog that has had its leg mended will bring other limping dogs to the man who was kind to it. Whoever really believes anything becomes a propagandist. Look round about us to-day! and hearken to the Babel, the wholesale Babel of noises, where every sort of opinion is trying to make itself heard. It sounds like a country fair where every huckster is shouting his loudest. That shows that the men believe the things they profess. Thank God that there is so much earnestness in the world! And are Christians to be dumb whilst all this vociferous crowd is calling its wares, and quacks are standing on their platforms shouting out their specifics, which are mostly delusions? Have we not a medicine that will cure everything, a real heal-all, a veritable pain-killer? If we believe that we have, certainly we will never rest till we share our boon with our brethren.

¶ I am, and have for a long time been, persuaded that if the Christian Church were to claim that fulness of the Holy Spirit which is her birthright, her equipment, the greatest of all her needs, the proportion of what we call evangelists to pastors and teachers would be very much larger than it is at present. Touched with this flame, not only a multitude of ministers, but of the laity, who have hardly tasted the ecstasy of soul-winning, would joyously respond to God's call with a fervent "Here am I, send me!" Then He could and would send them, and they would come back laden with trophies of victory.[1]

3. Andrew did not wait until the Master had given him full equipment and training. He started with imperfect knowledge. As yet, and for long after, there was an earthly and mistaken element in Andrew's idea of the Messiah whom he had found. He knew that the Messiah had come, but of the vast consequences

[1] T. Waugh, *Twenty-three Years a Missioner*, 65.

to the world, to the soul, of that coming—consequences extending through the sphere of time into the depths of the eternal future, as we find these things developed in the Epistles of St. Paul—of these at such a time he must have had only an indistinct perception. One truth was clearly present to him, whatever else it might involve, and that one truth sufficed to kindle every affection and power of his spirit, to concentrate in its analysis every ray of his understanding,—"We have found the Messiah." He had seen enough of Jesus in those few hours to be awed, attracted, won,—enough to know instinctively that John was right,—enough to know that here was one whom he could perfectly love and trust,—enough to know that the best thing he could possibly do for those nearest and dearest to himself was to tell them of his own experience.

¶ In a list of Indian missionaries of Mohammedanism, published in the journal of a religious and philanthropic society of Lahore, says Arnold in *The Preaching of Islam*, "We find the names of schoolmasters, government clerks in the Canal and Opium Departments, traders, including a dealer in camel carts, an editor of a newspaper, a bookbinder, and a workman in a printing establishment. These men devote the hours of leisure left them after the completion of the day's labour to the preaching of their religion in the streets and bazaars of Indian cities, seeking to win converts from among Christians and Hindus, whose religious belief they controvert and attack." This is what constitutes the power of Islam. With no missionary organization, with no missionary order, the religion yet spread over Western Asia and Northern Africa, and retains still its foothold on the soil of Europe. Where the common man believes his religion and spreads it, other men believe it, too.[1]

III.

A Great Service.

"He brought him unto Jesus."

"He brought him unto Jesus"; it was the kindest and best service that any human being could do to any other.

1. Consider the *nature of the man* who performed this service.

[1] R. E. Speer, *A Young Man's Questions*, 55.

(1) Andrew was an *ordinary* man. He was not a genius. He does not play a conspicuous part in the gospel drama. We know him better than some of the other disciples, better than Bartholomew and Jude, but not nearly so well as Peter and John. He is one of the subordinate characters stepping on the stage here and there to do a bit of modest work, and then vanishing into the background. Men like Andrew are the one-talented men who use their one talent sweetly and nobly, and show us all the way we ought to go and the work which we can do.

¶ We often think that if we had that man's means or that man's ability or that man's opportunity, we could do something worth doing; but, as we are, there is no possibility of any great thing. Yet God does not want us to fill any other man's place, or to do any other man's work. God wants us to improve our own opportunity with the possessions and the powers that He has given us. It is a very great thing for us to do the very best we can do just where and as we are. God asks no one of us to do more than this, nor has any one of us a right to do less.[1]

(2) Andrew had come from *communion with Christ.* He had spent a night with the Master, and in the sacred, secret converse of those few mysterious hours his whole life was altered. He had seen and had found the Christ. Here we have the secret of success. It is to be found in communion with Christ. This is the indispensable qualification of every Christian worker. It makes of the dwarf a giant, and without it the giant becomes a dwarf. In the Christian realm we can influence others only as we ourselves are influenced.

¶ Place a bar of iron, cold and lifeless, by a piece of wood. The wood is not influenced at all, but when the iron is placed in the furnace and left there for a while and afterwards withdrawn, a change is then effected, for the iron seems to have ceased to be iron and to have become a mass of fire. If placed then by the side of the piece of wood how different is the result; as it has been influenced, so it influences, and the wood too becomes a mass of fire.[2]

(3) This ordinary man, coming from communion with Christ, shows three remarkable qualities—the *courage* which initiates, the *sympathy* which communicates with others, the *humility*

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Everyday Living*, 19.
[2] William Arthur, *The Tongue of Fire*.

which obliterates self. Courage, sympathy, humility—three chief elements in the saintly character.

(*a*) There is first of all the *courage* of the man, the boldness which takes the first step, the spirit which comes bravely forward while all others are hanging back, timid or irresolute. We have many phrases which bear testimony to the value and the rarity of this courage. We speak of breaking the ice, of shooting Niagara. It is a plunge into an unknown future, where none has gone before, of which none can foretell the consequences. We say that it is the first step which costs. We are lost in admiration of the soldier who steps forward to lead the forlorn hope, to storm the breach, though almost certain death is his destiny. The forlorn hope—does not the very phrase tell its own tale? Yes, it is the first step which costs. Where one—though only one—has gone before, it does not cost half—not a twentieth part—of the bravery, the resolution, for a second to follow. And for a third and a fourth the degree of courage required lessens in a rapidly decreasing scale. The first step was taken by Andrew. He was the leader of the forlorn hope of Christendom, the first to storm the citadel of the Kingdom of heaven, taking it as alone it can be taken—taking it by force. Be not deceived. Only the violent enter therein—only the brave, resolute, unflinching soldiers, who will brook no opposition, who make straight for truth and righteousness and love, come what may, who are ready to lose their lives that they may save them. This unique glory is Andrew's. Peter may have held a more commanding position in the Church of Christ; Paul may have travelled over a larger area and gathered greater numbers into the fold; but Andrew's crown has a freshness and a brightness of its own which shall never fade—a glory of which no man can rob it.

¶ On Sunday afternoons the boys in his passage would often indulge in pillow fights or games of a somewhat rowdy order. In order to stop this, Hogg, now one of the eldest boys at Joynes', suggested that they should all club together and have tea in his room, and then read aloud. He collected a large quantity of old *Chambers's Journals*, in which he would look out any curious or interesting articles for these Sunday afternoons. After a time he proposed that before separating a chapter of Scripture should be read and a prayer offered. It must have cost any boy a great effort to make such a suggestion, though the fact that a strong

religious revival was then moving England, and that the movement had touched even the great public schools, may have made it a slightly less difficult innovation than one would imagine. Yet his contemporaries own they "would not have stood it from any one else"; and he himself spoke of it as a "sore struggle." As a matter of fact, very little opposition or ridicule was met with. Most of the boys respected him for having the courage of his convictions; the majority responded to the invitation; those who held aloof were by no means antagonistic. Young Hogg used to read the chapter, and usually made some remarks as he did so; occasionally other boys would take an active part, and thus gradually the *Chambers's Journals* were dropped, and the gathering became a regular Bible Class.[1]

(*b*) The second quality is wholly different. It is the *sympathy* which mediates; the temper and character which draws others together; the "conductivity" of the man. It is a remarkable fact that, after this first meeting with Christ, every subsequent notice of Andrew specially brings out this feature in his character. It is not that he does any great thing himself, but that he is the means of getting great things done for or by others. What was his first impulse, what was his first act, after his call? Not the establishment of his own position with Christ, not the proclamation of his discovery on the housetops, nothing of self or self-seeking in any, even in its highest, form; but "he first findeth his own brother Simon"; "and he brought him to Jesus"—brought him who was henceforward to be the leader of the Apostles, the foremost after the Ascension to proclaim his risen Lord to a hostile world, the earliest to gather the first-fruits of the Gentiles into the garner of Christ.

¶ Dr. Trumbull was often spoken of as being a man of exceptional "tact." He practised pretty constantly at individual soul-winning from the time when he first found his Saviour, at twenty-one, until his death more than fifty years later. People who knew him and his ways, and his lifelong habit, have said of him, "Oh, it was 'second nature' to Dr. Trumbull to speak to a man about his soul. He simply couldn't help doing it, it was so easy for him. *I* never could get *his* ease in the work." And in so saying they showed how little they knew of him or of the demands of this work upon every man. The book on *Individual Work* was written after its author was seventy years of age.

[1] *Quintin Hogg*, 36.

Hear what he had to say as to the "ease" which his long practice had brought him: "From nearly half a century of such practice, as I have had opportunity day by day, I can say that I have spoken with thousands upon thousands on the subject of their spiritual welfare. Yet, so far from my becoming accustomed to this matter, so that I can take hold of it as a matter of course, I find it as difficult to speak about it at the end of these years as at the beginning. Never to the present day can I speak to a single soul for Christ without being reminded by Satan that I am in danger of harming the cause by introducing it just now. If there is one thing that Satan is sensitive about, it is the danger of a Christian's harming the cause he loves by speaking of Christ to a needy soul. He [Satan] has more than once, or twice, or thrice, kept me from speaking on the subject by his sensitive pious caution, and he has tried a thousand times to do so. Therefore my experience leads me to suppose that he is urging other persons to try any method for souls except the best one."[1]

(*c*) The third feature in his character is intimately connected with the second. To Andrew was given the *humility which obliterates self*. He, who brought others forward, was content himself to retire. Just as at a later date Barnabas, the primitive disciple, took Saul by the hand, introduced him to the elder Apostles, and started him on his career as an Evangelist, content that his own light should wane in the greater glory of this new and more able missionary of Christ, so was it now. Andrew was the first called Apostle. Andrew brought Simon Peter to Christ. Yet Andrew is known only as Simon Peter's brother. We know in what school he had learnt this lesson. Andrew was the Baptist's disciple, and was not this the lesson of the Baptist's life? "He must increase, but I must decrease"—obscuration, eclipse, obliteration of self. The personality of Andrew is lost in the personality of Simon. So it is truly said that the world knows nothing of its greatest benefactors. They are lost in their work, or are lost in others.

¶ Lord, I read at the transfiguration that Peter, James, and John were admitted to behold Christ; but Andrew was excluded. So again at the reviving of the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, these three were let in, and Andrew shut out. Lastly, in the agony, the aforesaid three were called to be

[1] C. G. Trumbull, *Taking Men Alive*, 53.

witnesses thereof, and still Andrew left behind. Yet he was Peter's brother, and a good man, and an apostle; why did not Christ take the two pair of brothers? was it not a pity to part them? But methinks I seem more offended thereat than Andrew himself was, whom I find to express no discontent, being pleased to be accounted a loyal subject for the general, though he was no favourite in these particulars. Give me to be pleased in myself, and thankful to thee, for what I am, though I be not equal to others in personal perfections. For such peculiar privileges are courtesies from thee when given, and no injuries to us when denied.[1]

2. Consider the *manner of the service.*

(1) It was service rendered as *the result of experience.*—No sermon did Andrew preach that day. He simply uttered one sentence, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." Who could not have uttered such a sentence, if he had possessed the experience? The man who had experienced the effect of his eyes being opened, the woman who had experienced the opening out of her life before her eyes—both spoke with such power that men believed the words they uttered. So Andrew had found the Messiah, and the words of such a man, though few, had a weight such as those of a Demosthenes could not carry. Eloquence can never make up for the lack of experience. Experience with one sentence can move men as eloquence without it can never do, and Andrew with his one sentence brought Peter to Christ. When the Holy Ghost fell upon the Apostles they went out stating that God had "shed forth this"; so, to-day, the man who has spent the night with the Christ can go forth and, with the light of joy in his life, and the ring of conviction in his tone, can say, "We have found the Christ," and men will listen to his message.

¶ Some of us are influenced by argument and some of us are not. You may pound a man's mistaken creed to atoms with sledge-hammers of reasoning, and he is not much nearer being a Christian than he was before; just as you may pound ice to pieces and it is pounded ice after all. The mightiest argument that we can use, and the argument that we can all use, if we have got any religion in us at all, is that of Andrew, "We have found the Messiah."[2]

[1] Thomas Fuller.

[2] A. Maclaren.

¶ When John Wesley went as a missionary to Georgia, he went, as he writes, "to save his own soul"; but two years later he returned to England a disappointed man, having saved neither his own soul nor those of the colonists and Indians. "I who went to America to convert others," he says, "was never myself converted." Then, with a new accession of self-forgetfulness, he turned from his own salvation to the service of others. The words spoken of his Master came home to him: "He saved others; himself he cannot save." He was no longer Wesley the ritualist, but Wesley the missionary. "He first findeth his own brother Simon," and soon his own life acquired confidence and peace. "His soul was saved," says his biographer, "because he had found his work."[1]

(2) It was service rendered *by the utterance of one sentence.*—Andrew was a young convert and had no learning. He could not argue about it, and he could not preach about it—all of which was a great mercy. Because he could do nothing else he had to stick to the point—"We have found the Messiah." The simple sentence uttered by one man to another is often the way by which men are brought into touch with Christ. We cannot all be preachers to the crowd, nor are we all called to such a work; but we are all qualified and we are all called to pass the message on to any one into whose company we may be thrown.

¶ The real powers of the Early Church were not men who could harangue crowds or arouse congregations by their fervid appeals, but men who could talk to a brother, a friend, a companion, a neighbour, about the wonderful love and beauty of Jesus Christ, and out of the fulness of their own joys testify to those nearest them of the new life which they had found. It was in that way chiefly, and not by the orators of the Church, that Christianity was spread in the early days. A man who had realized the blessedness of it passed it on to the one next to him. It went like a forest fire, each tree kindled set fire to another. Each convert was as good as two, for each one made a second. The Christian plant, like every other, propagated itself; the flower of its joy dropped seed as it ripened into fruit. Prisoners whispered the glad secret to their gaolers, soldiers to their comrades, servants to their masters, women to every one who would listen. Each saved soul was eager to save another, eager to pluck a brand from the burning and win a jewel for Christ. So the work went on, so the army of the Lord grew, so the great

[1] F. G. Peabody, *Mornings in the College Chapel*, ii. 59.

Roman Empire was slowly subdued under the Cross, and Christianity made the ruling faith of the world.[1]

¶ I recently read a story in some newspaper or other about a minister who preached a very elaborate course of lectures in refutation of some form of infidelity, for the special benefit of a man who attended his place of worship. Soon after, the man came and declared himself a Christian. The minister said to him, "Which of my discourses was it that removed your doubts?" The reply was, "Oh! it was not any of your sermons that influenced me. The thing that set me thinking was that a poor woman came out of the chapel beside me, and stumbled on the steps, and I stretched out my hand to help her, and she said, 'Thank you!' Then she looked at me and said, 'Do you love Jesus Christ, my blessed Saviour?' And I did not, and I went home and thought about it; and now I can say *I* love Jesus."[2]

(3) Andrew did not wait till he could talk to a crowd; *he took the message to one.*—Have you ever noticed what stress the Scripture lays upon *one* soul—as if with a tender regard for the hidden workers who deal with the one at a time? There is joy among the angels in the presence of God over *one* sinner that repenteth. It is the *one* sheep that the Shepherd seeketh, and bringeth home with rejoicing. It is the *one* piece of money that the woman makes so much of. It is the *one* son that has all to himself the loveliest parable that earth—or surely heaven either—has ever listened to. "He brought *him* to Jesus"—do not wait for *them.*

¶ We are told of a minister in Scotland, who was called to task by some of the Church officers because of his want of success. And he had to confess that during the whole year only one young man had joined the Church, so that his heart was sick within him. But that very night the same young man spoke to his pastor of his intention of becoming a missionary. Then the pastor's grief was turned into joy, and he thought that the work would be judged by quality rather than by quantity. The young man was Robert Moffat, who afterwards became famous by his mission work in the dark continent. The year of his conversion was not barren in the annals of that country parish after all.[3]

¶ In the Introduction to his *Lives of Twelve Good Men,* Burgon gives a sketch of two or three others whom he knew and who deserved to be called "good." Among them is Charles Portalés

[1] J. G. Greenhough. [2] A. Maclaren. [3] H. C. Williams.

Golightly. He says: The Rev. T. Mozley (who is not promiscuous in his bestowal of praise) "acknowledges the greatest of obligations" to him. "Golightly" (he says) "was the first human being to talk to me, directly and plainly, for my soul's good; and *that* is the debt that no time, no distance, no vicissitudes, no differences, can efface; no, not eternity itself." On which, Dean Goulburn remarks—"But this was what Golightly was always doing; and, for the sake of doing which, he cultivated the acquaintance of all undergraduates who were introduced to him; showed them no end of kindness, walked with them, talked with them, took them with him for a Sunday excursion to his little parish of Toot Baldon."[1]

(4) *The closer the tie, the more emphatic the testimony.*—It is what brother says to brother, husband to wife, parent to child, friend to friend, far more than what preacher says to hearer, that carries with it irresistible, persuasive power. When the truth of the utterance is vouched for by the obvious gladness and purity of the life; when the finding of the Christ is obviously as *real* as the finding of a better situation and as satisfying as promotion in life, then conviction will be carried with the announcement.

¶ Some who would not hesitate to speak of spiritual things to casual strangers find their tongues tied when they ought to speak for God to a wife, a husband, a brother, or a child. It is perhaps because we have an instinctive feeling that our intimate associates know us too well; they would feel that some inconsistency, not to say insincerity, in our Christian conversation should make us silent. Let the thought of our duty to those we love drive us to commune with our hearts and discover what it is that ties our tongue and hinders us from giving the word of warning or exhortation that is due.[2]

3. Consider the *success of the service.*

Andrew gained his brother. Simon yielded and went, and the first interview must have gladdened Andrew's heart. When Jesus beheld him He said: "Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A Stone." We cannot now tell all that Peter did; how his boldness and open confession of Christ confirmed the hearts of Andrew and his fellow-disciples; how, though he fell, he received this charge:

[1] J. W. Burgon, *Lives of Twelve Good Men*, i., xxv.
[2] C. Bickersteth, *The Gospel of Incarnate Love*, 10.

"Strengthen thy brethren"; how thousands were converted in a day by his preaching; and how, in the Epistles he has left, he has been made such an instrument for comforting and building up the people of God in all ages. We hear very little afterwards of Andrew; no doubt he continued to work in the spirit of his first mission effort, and no doubt also he had his continued success; yet he had not the ability and energy of Peter, and he retires into the shade. But we cannot forget that it is to Andrew we owe Simon Peter, and all that he did. Often afterwards, we may well believe, when Andrew saw Peter's character unfolding, when he beheld him opening the door of faith on the Day of Pentecost, and standing forth as one of the pillars of the Christian Church, he must have thanked Christ that He not only touched his own heart, but put it into his heart to bring his brother.

¶ God often uses minnows to catch salmon. It may be the consolation that He gives to the ungifted, that they should be the means of bringing to Jesus the eminently useful. There is Ananias leading the blind Saul to the Saviour; and little Bilney leading sturdy Hugh Latimer; and John Bunyan drawn by the godly gossip of the old women at Bedford; and John Wesley led by the simple Moravians. In our own time instances are plentiful enough. We think of Spurgeon going burdened to the Primitive Methodists, and hearing from some plain man who murdered the Queen's English the way of life everlasting. We think of Thomas Binney, led by the simple workman to the Methodist Class-meeting, and there having the good seed sown. Andrew did a good day's work when he brought Simon to Jesus. It is a sign of genius when you can turn to good account the gifts of other people. Let us be geniuses of that sort if we cannot be of any other. And the best way to turn any man's gifts to good account is to bring him to Jesus.

¶ Consider the untold capacities for high saintliness which lie buried in the mass of men who, as yet, know nothing of grace and truth. Our cities—these great hives of agglomerated human beings—abound with men and women who are, in the eye of society—who are, it may be, in the eye of the law—among the worst and the vilest, but who have bright and clear understandings; who have warm and generous hearts; who need but the illumination of truth, and the invigorating touch of grace, to become great in the true sense of that much misused word. "I have much people in this city," was the motto traced by Christ Himself over one of the most vicious towns of ancient heathendom.

Humanity is like a mine wherein flints and diamonds lie side by side in an indistinguishable disorder until the light of Divine knowledge is poured in upon the buried mass, and the hidden beauties of lives outwardly degraded are revealed. How often does it happen that the found are greater, far greater, than the finder; that Peter, in the event, takes precedence altogether of Andrew; that those who enter last into the Kingdom of heaven are bidden, in the eternal presence-chamber, to stand among the first.[1]

[1] Canon Liddon.

The First Sign.

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THE FIRST SIGN.

This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him.—John ii. 11.

1. HAVING recorded the testimony borne to Jesus by the Baptist, and having cited instances in which the overmastering personality of Jesus elicited from simple-hearted and godly men the acknowledgment of His majesty, St. John now proceeds to relate the homely incident which gave occasion to the first public act in which His greatness was exhibited.

2. The keynote of this Gospel was struck in the earlier verses of the first chapter in the great words, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, full of grace and truth." To these words there is an evident reference in the language of the text. The Evangelist regards Christ's first miracle as the first ray of that forth-flashing glory of the Incarnate Word.

3. Again, in the text the prediction of Jesus to Nathanael finds its first fulfilment. Something of the significance of the name "Son of man" is made clear. Heaven opens itself in grace and kindness and sympathy towards men; and He who refused to convert stones into bread to gratify Himself, does not refuse to convert water into wine to assist others—a speaking symbol of His whole ministry.

The threefold comment of the Evangelist is of the utmost importance: (1) This was a sign, and Christ's first sign; (2) in it He manifested His glory; (3) His disciples believed on Him.

I.

The Sign.

"This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee."

1. Let us recall the *circumstances* in which the miracle was wrought.

(1) The exact dating of this first miracle indicates an eye-witness. St. John says that it took place three days after the first calling of Nathanael and Philip; and, therefore, four days after that of Andrew and Peter, of John himself, and, in all probability, of James.

(2) With this band of newly chosen disciples, our Lord had walked from the valley of the Jordan—the scene of His baptism—into Galilee; and He had halted at Cana, the native village of Nathanael. Modern topography inclines to identify this Cana, not, as formerly, with Kefr Kenna, but with Kânat el-Jelil, some six miles N.E. of Nazareth. It is called Cana of Galilee to distinguish it from Cana in Asher, S.E. from Tyre.

(3) A wedding feast was being kept by a poor family of Cana; the members of which were, it is clearly implied, on terms of intimacy with our Lord's virgin-mother, who had lived for so many years at the neighbouring village of Nazareth. Mary was present; and, as was natural, our Lord and His disciples were invited, probably when the feast, which generally lasted some seven days, had already been continued for three or four.

(4) The supply of wine was running short; and Mary, who, as is clear from her own *Magnificat*, had inferred from the terms of the Annunciation the unique dignity and the miraculous powers of her Divine Son, applied to Him for help in the emergency. Whether she wished Him to work a miracle, or merely stated the case to Him, leaving it in His hands to act as He saw best, is not clear from the narrative. But our Lord acts as He acted when twelve years old; as He acted at a later date, when His mother and His brethren wished to speak with Him, in the midst of a crowd of persons whom He was addressing. He will not allow that the tenderest of earthly ties can be permitted to affect the solemn and predestined sequence of actions in the establishment of His Kingdom. Even Mary may not hasten His resolves.

"Woman, what common interest have we in this matter?" (such is the real force of the original). "Mine hour for action is not yet come." Mary does not reply; she merely bids the servants attend strictly to her Son's orders, whatever they might be, in the confident expectation that He will certainly act, though she knows not how. Behind the couches on which the guests were seated, were six vessels for holding water, placed there with a view to that ceremonial washing of hands and vessels before and after meals which was a matter of strict custom among the Jews. Our Lord desired that these vessels should be filled; the amount of water poured into them would have been, speaking roughly, about one hundred and twenty English gallons. St. John, who was an eye-witness, gives these details with great particularity; and his silence implies that our Lord did not mark, either by raising His hand, or uttering any word of command or blessing, the moment of the miraculous change. But it must have taken place immediately on the filling of the vessels, since our Lord, without any pause, desired the servants to draw from the vessels and ask the president of the feast to taste. Then it was that what had taken place was discovered; the president complimented the bridegroom on the excellence of the wine, which, contrary to the usual practice, he had reserved for a late hour in the entertainment. The president did not know the source of the supply, as did those servants who had poured water into and were now drawing wine from the vessels of purification. But that the water of purification had become wine must have been gradually whispered among the company from guest to guest.

2. The *manner* in which the miracle was performed deserves attention.

(1) Our Lord began His service in the little world of the Galilean and Judæan ministrations, by being on that small stage what God is in the universe—an anonymous, or unknown, or hardly known Being. He came to Cana, perhaps as a stranger, possibly as a poor relation; for it was an occasion when poor relations are in order. It does not appear that He was asked to repeat even a holy word over the feast, for another was appointed master of the feast. The bridegroom and the bride wore their festal crowns; as for Him, while He was in this world, He dis-

carded His aureole, or wore it only on rare days and in retreat, as at the Transfiguration. You might have come to the feast, and marked all the notables, from near and far; He would not be of them: this one is the bridegroom of the day, and this the bride; this the bride's father or mother; and this the ruler of the feast: and this an anonymous Stranger, one of the Nazareth party; we have not seen Him in these parts before.

(2) All unobtrusively did He proceed. No stir was made in the water. No outflashing of golden splendour startled the guests. No curious eyes were bidden watch the strange phenomenon. No word from Christ announced the accomplishment of a wonder. "Draw out now, and bear unto the governor," were the simple words addressed to the servants by the Almighty Worker. In the briefest space of time the feat was done. So calmly, so suddenly does Christ work. So does He present the result without revealing the process. The great God hideth Himself and yet worketh most gloriously in nature and in man.

(3) In working the miracle, Christ made use of common things. "There were six waterpots of stone set there." Christ used what was set there. He observed the greatest economy in the use of the miraculous. He did not create either the waterpots or the water; the miracle was in the act of conversion only.

(4) The miracle required the co-operation of the servants and a signal exercise of the obedience of faith. The waterpots had to be filled with water, and on an occasion when to offer water to guests instead of wine would seem a serious insult and a bad omen, these servants had to pour out what they believed to be water, as if it were wine. We are not told when the change was wrought, at what precise moment "the conscious water saw its God and blushed." Probably not all the water in the waterpots became wine, but only that which in the obedience of faith the servants poured out into the glasses of the guests. The practical lesson, however, is obvious; it is this: Fill the waterpots to the brim, leave the miracle to Him. He will not fail in His part if we do ours. The water will be turned into wine, prayer will become communion; faith will become vision; duty will become delight, and even pain a sacrament of blessing. But we must fill the waterpots to the brim. We must give to God full measure.

¶ It is our part to obey God in simplicity; what is commanded we are to do, and while we work He Himself will also work. He may do so in no visible way, as Christ here did nothing visibly, but He will be with us, effectually working. As the will of Christ pervaded the water so that it was endowed with new qualities, so can His will pervade our souls, with every other part of His creation, and make them conformable to His purpose. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it"; this is the secret of miracle-working. Do it, though you seem to be but wasting your strength and laying yourself open to the scorn of onlookers; do it, though in yourself there is no ability to effect what you are aiming at; do it wholly, up to the brim, as if you were the only worker, as if there were no God to come after you and supply your deficiencies, but as if any shortcoming on your part would be fatal; do not stand waiting for God to work, for it is only in you and by you that He performs His work among men.[1]

(5) It was a surprise to the guests. The ruler of the feast, on tasting the wine, unaware of any miracle, complimented the bridegroom on having acted contrary to general usage. "Every man," said he, "at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now."

¶ One of the surprises that God treats us to in the course of our life, which will no doubt be also the overwhelming surprise of our first review of this life from the vantage-ground of a larger and better, consists in the disclosure of the way in which our anonymous Lover has been besetting us behind and before, and laying His hand upon us. How many constraints that make for salvation have never been registered in the consciousness or printed off on the memory! how many times there are when qualification for duty is given concerning which we shall by and by hear the voice saying, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me!"[2]

¶ Readers of Cowper's *Memoirs* will remember the way in which Theodora, his cousin, pursued him through life with gift and remembrance and token that came he knew not from whence. At one time it was a snuff-box of tortoise-shell with a familiar landscape on the lid, and the portrait of his three hares; at another it was a seasonable gift of money; and tradition tells that upon one occasion, when these nameless tokens reached him, he remarked, "Dear Anonymous is come again; God bless *him*."

[1] Marcus Dods. [2] J. Rendel Harris, *Union with God*, 12.

It is difficult to understand how a poet could have been so blind as not to know that such nameless and appropriate gifts never come except from God, and from good women. But even when we lay the charge of want of insight at the poet's door, we are checked by One who says, "Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me? Have I never looked in at thy window, or left gift at thy door?" Yet oftentimes the expression of the conscious heart has never been raised so high as even to the "Dear Anonymous" of the poet. It is a part of God's loving way with us that His criticism of our blindness towards Him is a gradual revelation; He can always make us ashamed when He wants to.[1]

3. Now consider the significance of this incident. It was *a sign.*

There are four chief names given to our Lord's miracles. One of these is *wonders.* In it their marvellous character is recognized. But it is very remarkable that this word is never applied to a miracle without one of the others to qualify and explain it. It seems as if, to the sacred writers, the marvel was the aspect of the miracle on which they thought it least important to dwell. Another name is *works.* This is one often used by our Lord Himself, and specially recorded by St. John. To the Master and the beloved disciple the miracles were works of mercy. They were part of that great mission for which our Lord had come to earth—the removal of sorrow and suffering, and so the leading of all to Himself for salvation. Another of these titles is a word meaning *power.* It is often applied to our Lord's miracles, and is once or twice translated "miracle" in our English Version, but more often "mighty work." It exhibits the miracles as acts of power, thus showing them to be the apparent suspension by God of the ordinary laws of nature. The fourth name given to them is *signs.* This is the word used in the text, and generally by St. John, where "miracle" occurs in the Authorized Version. It is perhaps the most significant and spiritual of all these designations. For it shows the miracles to be the signs of something else, to have something behind them to which they are intended to point. It is hardly necessary to ask what that is. It is the Divinity of Him who wrought them.

(1) This is the day of evasions and attempted explanations

[1] J. Rendel Harris.

regarding all the supernatural events of the Bible. The trend of much of the so-called religious teaching of to-day is toward the removal of the miraculous, both in character and in action, from the Gospel, and the relegation of both the Gospel and its Founder to a place, the highest indeed, but still a place among the religious teachers and systems of the ages. The miracles of healing, and of restoration of bodily function are, in this view, explained as simply the result of superior knowledge of the laws of life, of which it is said contemporary vital science is even now gaining great insight. But here is a miracle inexplicable upon such a supposition; a miracle entering into the domain, as nearly absolute as anything earthly can be, of natural law, where, as in the kindred miracle of the stilling of the tempest, the Power that created, simply controls, and the Infinite masters the finite.

(2) What is a miracle? Bishop Gore, in his Bampton Lectures, has defined a miracle as "an event in physical nature, which makes unmistakably plain the presence and direct action of God working for a moral end." God, we know, is always present and working in Nature, and man was meant to recognize and praise Him in the ordinary course of events; but, in fact, man's sin has blinded his spiritual eye, he has lost the power of seeing behind physical order. The prevalence of law in nature, which is its glory and perfection, has even led men to forget God and deny His presence. Now in a miracle God so works that man is forced to notice a presence which is no mere blind force, but a loving personal will; God breaks into the common order of events, that He may manifest the real meaning of nature. Hence miracles are God's protests against man's blindness; protests in which He violates a superficial uniformity in the interests of deeper law.

(3) On the Christian hypothesis, Christ is a new nature. "The Word was made flesh," and as a new nature it is surely to be expected that He will exhibit new phenomena; a new vital energy will radiate from Him, for the very springs of universal life are in Him. So in Christ we naturally expect the material body to exhibit a far higher degree of subservience to spirit than was ever known before. For be it remembered, Christ's miracles were not meaningless portents; they were redemptive acts, object-lessons teaching the same lessons of love and mercy

as His words conveyed. Given the perfect man, who is Lord of Nature, surely the wonder lies in the limitation of His power, and not in any manifestation of it. Given the required conditions of spiritual life, nothing which does not involve contradiction is impossible. To Him who could work, not merely on nature, but on that substance—spirit and life—which underlies and makes nature, changing water into wine, and stilling a storm, were works as surely according to unvarying law as the natural growth of the vine and the calming of the tempest. We have often to attain results laboriously and painfully, because we work, not on substance, but merely on surface appearances or phenomena, while the Spiritual Man worked directly. The more we contemplate the personality of Jesus Christ and His moral authority and purpose, the more we shall find that His miracles were according to the law of His being; or, to use an expression of Athanasius, they were "in rational sequence." And if, as Dr. Sanday says, we thus take the personality of our Lord as the true *rationale* of miracle, "many things will be clear to us that would not be clear otherwise."

I say, that miracle was duly wrought
When, save for it, no faith was possible.
Whether a change were wrought i' the shows o' the world,
Whether the change came from our minds which see
Of the shows o' the world so much as and no more
Than God wills for His purpose,—(what do I
See now, suppose you, there where you see rock
Round us?)—I know not; such was the effect,
So faith grew, making void more miracles
Because too much: they would compel, not help.
I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it,
And has so far advanced thee to be wise.[1]

4. It was the beginning of His signs. "This beginning of his signs did Jesus." Here at this wedding-feast He felt Himself impelled to take the step which altered the whole character of His life. For from a private person He became by His first miracle a public and marked character with a definite career.

[1] Browning, *A Death in the Desert.*

"To live henceforth in the vortex of a whirlwind; to have no leisure so much as to eat, no time to pray save when others slept, to be the gazing-stock of every eye, the common talk of every tongue; to be followed about, to be thronged and jostled, to be gaped upon, to be hunted up and down by curious vulgar crowds; to be hated, and detested, and defamed, and blasphemed; to be regarded as a public enemy; to be watched and spied upon and trapped and taken as a notorious criminal"—is it possible to suppose that Christ was indifferent to all this, and that without shrinking He stepped across the line which marked the threshold of His public career? The glory that here shed a single ray into the rustic home of Cana must grow to that dazzling and perfect noon which shone from the Cross to the remotest corner of earth. The same capacity and willingness to bless mankind which here in a small and domestic affair brought relief to His embarrassed friends, must be adapted to all the needs of men, and must undauntedly go forward to the utmost of sacrifice. He who is true King of men must flinch from no responsibility, from no pain, from no utter self-abandonment to which the needs of men may call Him. And Jesus knew this. In those quiet hours and long, untroubled days at Nazareth He had taken the measure of this world's actual state, and of what would be required to lift men out of selfishness and give them reliance upon God. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me"—this was even now present to His mind. His glory was the glory of absolute self-sacrifice, and He knew what that involved. His kingship was the rendering of service no other could render.

¶ All beginnings have a wonderful interest for us. There is a peculiar pleasure in tracing a broad deep river, that bears upon its bosom the commerce of a nation, to its source far up among the mountains, in a little well whose overflowing waters a child's hand could stop; or in going back to the origin of a mighty nation like the Roman, in the drifting ashore, at the foot of the Palatine Hill, of the ark that contained the infant founders. Institutions, social or benevolent, that have been established for ages, derive a fresh charm from the consideration of their first feeble commencement, and the contrast between what they were then and what they are now. There is a mystery about a cloud coming all at once into the blue sky, a star appearing suddenly amid the twilight shades, a spring welling up in the midst of a

sandy plain. It seems as if something new were being created before our eyes. A sense of awe comes over us, as if brought into contact with another world. The miracle of Cana comes into the midst of the previous natural life of Jesus like a star out of the blue profound, like a well out of the dry mountain-side, like a rare, unknown flower appearing among the common indigenous plants of a spot. It brings us out of the narrow wall that hems us round, to the verge of God's infinity, where we can look over into the fathomless gulf. It is the base of that wonderful miracle structure of the gospel, of which the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the pinnacle.[1]

5. What special propriety was there in the selection of this particular work to introduce and inaugurate the whole train? It is evident from St. John's impressive words that he finds a strong significance and a profound fitness in the form His Master chose for the beginning of His signs. He can recall many other signs in which Christ manifested forth His glory; but he seems to see a special reason why this, and no other in that wondrous series, came first. He recognized that it was in harmony with the whole tenor of the revelation of the Incarnate Word that this should be His first miracle. For it gives us the key to all the miracles of our Lord.

(1) No other miracle has so much prophecy in it, no other would have inaugurated so fitly the whole work of the Son of God, which was characterized throughout as an ennobling of the common, a turning of the water of earth into the wine of heaven. We recall the first miracle of Moses, the turning of water into blood, symbolic of that law which, as St. Paul said, was "a ministration of death." Here the Saviour's first miracle, a ministration of life, symbolized the turning of the thin and watery elements of Jewish faith into that richer and nobler Christianity which makes saints out of sinners, and a new Paradise of God out of the wilderness of earth.

(2) The turning of water into wine was a sign of the character of all the works of goodness and wisdom under the Christian dispensation, by which humanity, suffering from the effects of sin, was to be raised into higher states of truth and righteousness. It combines in itself all the elements of Christ's miracles. It is a work of mercy; it is an emblem of a higher

[1] H. Macmillan, *The Marriage in Cana*, 218.

spiritual blessing; and it is a prophecy and a specimen of that new genesis, under which all things shall be restored to the primeval goodness and blessedness. Like an illuminated initial letter, which contains in itself an illustrated epitome of the contents of the whole chronicle, it appropriately begins the series of Christ's beneficent works by a beautiful picture of the nature and design of them all.

(3) In this first miracle we can see what was the motive always of Christ's miracles. He did not work miracles to win men's belief in His mission. On the contrary, we are told that it was one of His temptations, a temptation constantly resisted by Him, to use His power for this object without any other motive. It was the reproach He cast upon the people that except they saw signs and wonders they would not believe. He would never work a miracle merely for the sake of manifesting His glory. Whenever the unsympathetic, ignorant crowd clamoured for a sign; whenever with ill-concealed dislike they cried, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? Show us a sign from heaven, that we may believe," He was silent. To create a mere compulsory consent in minds which had no sympathy with Him was never a sufficient motive. Was there a sick child tossing in fever, was there a blind beggar by the roadside, was there a hungry crowd, was there even the joy of a feast interrupted: in these He could find a worthy occasion for a miracle; but never did He work a miracle merely for the sake of removing the doubts of reluctant men. His miracles were His kingly acts, by which He suggested what man's true life in God's Kingdom should be and will be. They were the utterance of what was in Him, the manifestation of His glory, the glory of One who came to utter the Father's heart to His strayed children.

Dear Friend! whose presence in the house,
Whose gracious word benign,
Could once, at Cana's wedding-feast,
Change water into wine,—

Come, visit us, and when dull work
Grows weary, line on line,
Revive our souls, and make us see
Life's water glow as wine.

Gay mirth shall deepen into joy,
  Earth's hopes shall grow divine,
When Jesus visits us, to turn
  Life's water into wine.

The social talk, the evening fire,
  The homely household shrine,
Shall glow with angel-visits when
  The Lord pours out the wine.

For when self-seeking turns to love,
  Which knows not mine and thine,
The miracle again is wrought,
  And water changed to wine.[1]

II.

The Glory Manifested.

"And manifested his glory."

This word *glory*, whether in its Greek or its Roman shape, had a very definite meaning in the days of the Apostles. It meant the admiration of men. The Greek word is derived from a root signifying to seem, and expresses that which a man seems or appears to his fellow-men. The Latin word for glory is expressly defined by Cicero to mean the love, trust, and admiration of the multitude; and a consequent opinion that the man is worthy of honour. Glory, in fact, is a relative word, and can be used only of any being in relation to other rational beings, and their opinion of him. What the Romans thought glorious in their days is notorious enough. No one can look upon the picture of a Roman triumph without seeing that their idea of glory was force, power, brute force, self-willed dominion, selfish aggrandizement. But this was not the glory which St. John saw in Christ, for His glory was full of grace, which is incompatible with self-will and selfishness. The Greek's meaning of glory is equally notorious. He called it wisdom. We call it craft—the glory of the sophist, who could prove or disprove anything for gain or display; the glory of the successful adventurer, whose shrewdness made its market out of the stupidity and vice of the barbarian. But this is not the

[1] James Freeman Clarke.

glory of Christ, for St. John saw that it was full of truth. Therefore, neither strength nor craft is the glory of Christ. For the glory of Christ is the glory of God, and none other, because He is very God, of very God begotten. In Christ, man sees the unseen, and absolute, and eternal God as He is, was, and ever will be. And the true glory of God is that God is good.

He was always in possession of glory, but He did not always *manifest* it. Generally it was veiled. It was only on rare occasions that He withdrew the veil and allowed it to flash forth. The sun always has glory, but not always do we see it; but it is made manifest when the gate of day is opened, when nature is sunned into one beauteous picture. The musician always has glory, but he manifests it when he elicits from his instrument the most delicious harmonies. Jesus had glory when His power was silent and inoperative, but He manifested it when He changed water into wine. He then showed that He was Lord of nature, that nature was His servant and subject to His commands.

¶ He believed that all things were one big Miracle, and when a man knows that much he knows something to go upon. He knew for a certainty that there was nothing great and nothing little in this world; and day and night he strove to think out his way into the heart of things, back to the place whence his soul had come.[1]

¶ To the wise man, the lightning only manifests the electric force which is everywhere, and which for one moment has become visible. As often as he sees it, it reminds him that the lightning slumbers invisibly in the dewdrop, and in the mist, and in the cloud, and binds together every atom of the water that he uses in daily life. But to the vulgar mind the lightning is something unique, a something which has no existence except when it appears. There is a fearful glory in the lightning because he sees it. But there is no startling glory and nothing fearful in the drop of dew, because he does not know, what the thinker knows, that the flash is there in all its terrors. So, in the same way, to the half-believer a miracle is the one solitary evidence of God. Without it he could have no certainty of God's existence.[2]

¶ We are more sure that God was in Christ when He said, "Rise up, and walk," than when He said, with absolving love, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee": more certain when He furnished wine for wedding guests, than when He said, "Father,

[1] Rudyard Kipling. [2] F. W. Robertson.

forgive them; for they know not what they do." O, a strange, and low, and vulgar appreciation this of the true glory of the Son of God, the same false conception that runs through all our life, appearing in every form—God in the storm, and the earthquake, and the fire, no God in the still small voice; glory in the lightning-flash, no glory and no God in the lowliness of the dew-drop; glory to intellect and genius, no glory to gentleness and patience; glory to every kind of *power*, none to the inward, invisible strength of the life of God in the soul of man.[1]

In what respects, then, did this first miracle manifest the glory of Christ? What was there in it to stir the thought and attract the adoration and trust of the disciples? Was it worthy to be the medium of conveying to their minds the first ideas of His glory they were to cherish? And what ideas must these have been?

1. It was *the glory of creative power.*—In this first miracle, Christ enters physical nature as its King, who can use it for His high ends. Never before has He wrought a miracle, but in this first command to nature there is no hesitation, no experimenting, no anxiety, but the easy confidence of a Master. He is either Himself the Creator of the world He comes to restore to worth and peace, or He is the Delegate of the Creator. We see in this first miracle that Christ is not an alien or a usurper, but One who has already the closest connection with us and with all things. We receive assurance that in Him God is present.

¶ The growth of every seed is a work of creation.[2]

¶ In every grape that hangs upon the vine, water is changed into wine, as the sap ripens into rich juice. Christ had been doing that all along, in every vineyard and orchard; and that was His glory. Now He has come to prove that; to draw back the veil of custom and carnal sense, and manifest Himself. Men had seen the grapes ripen on the tree; and they were tempted to say, as every one of us is tempted now, "It is the sun, and the air, the nature of the vine and the nature of the climate, that make the wine." Jesus comes and answers, "Not so; I make the wine; I have been making it all along. The vines, the sun, the weather, are only My tools, wherewith I worked, turning rain and sap into wine; and I am greater than they. I made them; I do not depend on them; I can make wine from water without vines, or

[1] F. W. Robertson. [2] Luther.

sunshine. Behold, and drink, and see my glory *without* the vineyard, since you had forgotten to see it *in* the vineyard!"[1]

¶ An Eastern fable says that a boy challenged his teacher to prove the existence of God by working a miracle. The teacher, who was a Brahmin, procured a large vessel filled with earth, in which he deposited a kernel. In the place where the kernel was put a green shoot soon appeared; the stem put forth leaves and branches, which soon spread over the whole apartment. It then budded with blossoms which, dropping off, left rich ripe fruits in their place. In the space of an hour the little seed had grown into a noble tree. The youth, overcome with amazement, exclaimed: "Now I know there is a God, for I have seen His power." The priest smiled, and said, "Simple child! that which you have seen is going on every day around you, only by a slower process. Every cocoanut, every pineapple, every banana, every mango, every guava, is a manifestation of Divine power, and would be considered by us miraculous if not so common. If the stars appeared only once in a thousand years, how we should wonder and adore! The thinking brain, the beating heart, the vibrating nerve, the forests, fields and flowers, the earth and sea teeming with living organisms, ranging from the jelly-fish up to man, the vast universe, with its starry worlds, its glorious constellations, its planetary systems all moving to the motions of the Divine will, are one great miracle. He who created still sustains. The hand that made all things still holds all things up. In God we live and move and have our being."[2]

Sick of myself and all that keeps the light
Of the blue skies away from me and mine,
I climb this ledge, and by this wind-swept pine
Lingering, watch the coming of the night.
'Tis ever a new wonder to my sight:
Men look to God for some mysterious sign,
For other stars than those that nightly shine,
For some unnatural symbol of His might:—
Would'st see a miracle as grand as those
The Prophets wrought of old in Palestine?
Come watch with me the shaft of fire that glows
In yonder west; the fair, frail palaces,
The fading alps and archipelagoes,
And great cloud-continents of sunset seas.[3]

[1] A. A. Brockington, *The Seven Signs*, 28.
[2] L. Crookall, *Topics in the Tropics*, 41.
[3] Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

2. It was *the glory of spiritual truth.*—To see this is harder than to discern the presence of creative power; it requires higher faculties in the soul. Yet most assuredly Christ's first miracle meant something more than a natural wonder brought about by, and indicating the presence of, superhuman power. It was, besides this, a parable and a prophecy; it was a discovery of laws whereby the King of the new spiritual empire would govern His subjects.

(1) In Christ's Kingdom, as at Cana, nature is ever being silently changed into something higher and better than it was when He came to visit it. Its poor materials are being gradually transfigured. Christ sits down at the board at which mankind feasts on the good things provided by the Creator; and when nature fails, as, if unassisted, she must fail, to satisfy man's deeper wants, grace does the rest. The water of man's natural character is constantly made wine by grace. Easy good-nature becomes charity towards God and man; well-exercised reason or far-sighted judgment is heightened into a lively faith which deals with the unseen as with a reality. The natural virtues, without losing their original strength, are transformed into their spiritual counterparts; and religion bestows a grace, an intelligence, an interest in life, a consistency and loftiness of aim, which are recognized by those who do not comprehend its secret. When a man who has been aimless, selfish, discontented, ill at ease with his work, and with all around him, suddenly becomes light-hearted, cheerful, active, ready and rejoicing to spend himself for others; full of the qualities which are as welcome to man as they are approved by God; of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance—how is this to be accounted for, but by His Presence who proclaims, "Behold, I make all things new!" He does not destroy what was good in the old, but He enriches it by His invigorating and transforming power, turning the water of nature into the wine of grace. Now, as at Cana of Galilee, men see the result; they do not see the process by which it is reached.

(2) At Cana of Galilee, too, we note not merely the secret transforming power of Christ in His Kingdom, but the law of continuous improvement which marks His work. The words which the president of the feast addressed to the bridegroom

were an unconscious utterance of high spiritual truth. "Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse." That is the way of the world; that is the history of the life of animal pleasure, and even of the life of mental pleasure, when a man's horizon does not extend beyond the grave. A time comes when the keenest enjoyments of the past pall upon the taste; when the finest faculties are sensibly giving out, and everything heralds decay. "But thou hast kept the good wine until now." That is the rule of Christ in His Kingdom; a rule of continuous progress from good to better, from better to best, if man will only will to have it so.

¶ Whenever we make a grateful review, let it mean instant commitment to a better future. If the mercies of God have blessedly beset us, let us not build "Three Tabernacles," that we may abide; but rather, like Paul, call the places where our mercies meet us "Three Taverns," then push on, thank God, and take courage. Every attainment is to be a footing for new attempts, and every goal a point of departure. "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?"[1]

3. It was *the glory of sanctifying all things natural.*—Remember what had gone before this. The life of John the Baptist was the highest form of religious life known in Israel. It was the life ascetic. It was a life of solitariness and penitential austerity. He drank no wine: he ate no pleasant food: he married no wife: he entered into no human relationship. It was the law of that stern and, in its way, sublime life, to cut out every human feeling as a weakness, and to mortify every natural instinct, in order to cultivate an intenser spirituality—a life in its own order grand, but indisputably unnatural.

(1) It was Christ's glory to declare the sacredness of all natural *relationships.* The first public act of His life was to go with His disciples to a marriage. He consecrated marriage, and the sympathies which lead to marriage. He declared the sacredness of feelings which had been reckoned carnal, and low, and human. He stamped His image on human joys, human connections, human relationships. He pronounced that they are more than human—as it were sacramental: the means whereby God's

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 15.

presence comes to us; the types and shadows whereby higher and deeper relationships become possible to us.

(2) It was His glory to declare the sacredness of all natural *enjoyments*. It was not a marriage only, but a marriage-feast, to which Christ conducted His disciples. Now we cannot get over this plain fact by saying that it was a religious ceremony; that would be mere sophistry. It was an indulgence in the festivity of life; as plainly as words can describe, here was a banquet of human enjoyment. The very language of the master of the feast about men who had well drunk tells us that there had been, not excess of course, but happiness there and merry-making. Neither can we explain away the lesson by saying that it is no example to us, for Christ was there to do good, and that what was safe for Him might be unsafe for us. For if His life is no pattern for us here in this case of accepting an invitation, in what can we be sure it *is* a pattern? Besides, He took His disciples there, and His mother was there; they were not shielded, as He was, by immaculate purity. He was there as a guest at first, as Messiah only afterwards: thereby He declared the sacredness of natural enjoyments.

¶ He comes, the Man of Sorrows, with the gift of joy in His hand. It is not an unworthy object—not unworthy, I mean, of a Divine sacrifice—to make men glad. It is worth His while to come from Heaven to agonize and to die, in order that He may sprinkle some drops of incorruptible and everlasting joy over the weary and sorrowful hearts of earth. We do not always give its true importance to gladness in the economy of our lives, because we are so accustomed to draw our joys from ignoble sources that in most of our joys there is something not altogether creditable or lofty. But Christ came to bring gladness, and to transform its earthly sources into heavenly fountains; and so to change all the less sweet, satisfying, and potent draughts which we take from earth's cisterns into the wine of the Kingdom; the new wine, strong and invigorating, "making glad the heart of man."[1]

(3) Christ saves not *from*, but *in*, life's common paths. He shares the joy at Cana, the sorrow at Bethany. Heaven and holiness are not here or there. They are where Jesus is, and Jesus walks the ordinary levels of life. The ascetic life of

[1] A. Maclaren.

abstinence, of fasting, austerity, singularity, is the lower and earthlier form of religion. The life of godliness is the glory of Christ. It is a thing far more striking to the vulgar imagination to be religious after the type and pattern of John the Baptist—to fast—to mortify every inclination—to be found at no feast—to wrap ourselves in solitariness, and abstain from all social joys; yes, and far easier so to live, and far easier so to win a character for religiousness. A silent man is easily reputed wise. A man who suffers none to see him in the common jostle and undress of life easily gathers round him a mysterious veil of unknown sanctity, and men honour him for a saint. The unknown is always wonderful. But the life of Him whom men called "a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners," was a far harder and a far heavenlier religion.

¶ To shroud ourselves in no false mist of holiness: to dare to show ourselves as we are, making no solemn affectation of reserve or difference from others; to be found at the marriage-feast; to accept the invitation of the rich Pharisee Simon, and the scorned Publican Zaccheus; to mix with the crowd of men, using no affected singularity, content to be creatures "not too bright or good for human nature's daily food"; and yet for a man amidst it all to remain a consecrated spirit, his trials and his solitariness known only to his Father—a being set apart, not *of* this world, alone in the heart's deeps with God; to put the cup of this world's gladness to his lips, and yet be unintoxicated; to gaze steadily on all its grandeur, and yet be undazzled, plain and simple in personal desires; to feel its brightness, and yet defy its thrall—this is the difficult, and rare, and glorious life of God in the soul of man. This was the peculiar glory of the life of Christ which was manifested in that first miracle which Jesus wrought at the marriage-feast in Cana of Galilee.[1]

4. It was *the glory of condescending love.*—The graciousness which Christ showed at that marriage-feast is neither more nor less than the boundless love of God, who could not live alone in the abyss, but must needs, out of His own Divine Charity, create the universe, that He might have somewhat besides Himself whereon to pour out the ocean of His love, which finds its own happiness in giving happiness to all created things, from the loftiest of rational beings down to the gnat which dances in the

[1] F. W. Robertson.

sun, and, for aught we know, to the very lichen which nestles in the Alpine rock.

(1) We may see in Christ's condescending love at Cana a ray of that love which redeemed the world. He was present, in all senses, as one of the guests; and His conduct at the feast was marked by the tenderest consideration for the feelings of the poor family, who were making the best of their brief day of festive joy. He saved them from the disappointment of being unable to entertain their friends; He added somewhat, we may well believe, to their household store besides; but He did this in such a manner as to hide His hand, and to lay them at the moment and before the guests under no embarrassing sense of obligation towards Himself. What is this but the glory of God's own bountiful Providence? Man, when he would assist his brother man, too often parades his benevolence; God gives us all that we have so unobtrusively that most of us altogether forget the Giver. We are the spoiled children of His love; we credit chance, or good fortune, or our own energy or far-sightedness, with the blessings which come only from Him. Yet He does not on that account inflict upon us the perpetual sense of our indebtedness.

(2) We have a token of His love in that He supplies the deficiencies of earthly sources. "The mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine." The world's banquet runs out, Christ supplies an infinite gift. These great waterpots that stood there, if the whole contents of them were changed, as is possible, contained far more than sufficient for the modest wants of the little company. The water that flowed from each of them in obedience to the touch of the servant's hand, if the change were effected then, as is possible, would flow on so long as any thirsted or any asked. And Christ gives to each of us, if we choose, a fountain that will spring up unto life eternal. And when the world's platters are empty, and the world's cups are all drained dry, He will feed and satisfy the immortal hunger and the blessed thirst of every spirit that longs for Him.

(3) The revelation of the glory of the Son is not limited to the knowledge of the fact of His being, and of His presence in the midst; it is a knowledge of the way in which He works, and an imitation of the same. At Cana of Galilee He was pleased to add to the world's joy; He took compassion upon people whose

cups were empty or half empty, and the more compassion, perhaps, because they were acting as if the cups were not empty. He made up that which lacked, and looked into the faces of the guests and said, "Lacked ye anything?" and every one could have answered, "Nothing, Lord, nothing!" Hard by, on a neighbouring hillside, is a second town, little known but for His presence, where He occupied Himself in subtracting from the world's pain; from Nain to Cana is a very short journey geographically: how far is it in everyday life? When there is a wedding in one street, there is always a funeral in the next. Christ attends both, because to add to the world's joy and to subtract from its pain are the alternating currents of the Eternal Love; and it is in these ministries, which belong to one sacred Person, who is equally at home in either, because eternally occupied in both, that we see the glory of the Son, who would not tell us by precept to rejoice with them that do rejoice and to weep with them that weep, unless He had furnished the perfect example that corresponds to the perfect precept. Nevertheless, we do not chiefly, and certainly not only, call Him the Man of Sorrows, for His highest title is the Master of the Feast, the Bridegroom.

(4) This first miracle is emblematic of the whole redemptive work of Christ. Is it possible that while He first put forth His power to restore the joy of these wedding guests, He should not have seen in the wine a symbol of the blood He was to shed for the refreshment and revival of men? The Baptist, whose mind was nourished with Old Testament ideas, called Christ the Bridegroom, and His people the Bride. Must not Jesus also have thought of those who believed in Him as His bride, and must not the very sight of a marriage have set His thoughts working regarding His whole relation to men? It is to the marriage supper of the *Lamb*, of Him who was slain, and has redeemed us by His blood, that we are invited. It is the "Lamb's wife" that St. John saw adorned as a bride for her Husband. And whosoever would sit down at that feast which consummates the experience of this life, terminating all its vacillation of trust and love, and which opens eternal and unlimited joy to the people of Christ, must wash and make white his garments in this blood. He must not shrink from the closest fellowship with the purifying love of Christ.

¶ Dr. Johnson, on a famous occasion, pronounced that "this merriment of parsons is mighty offensive," which is the judgment of Josephus repeated in another age; and Dr. Davidson's imagination of the child Jesus as "grave, retired and sad" is in the same key. In a half-comic way, that has given the law for men's behaviour in church, where they sit with such preternatural solemnity of countenance, as if religion were, of all interests, the most depressing. But think of Francis, that troubadour of Christ, with his wealth of sunny inspirations, with song and laughter and flowers woven in with that perpetual ministry to the Lord and His poor; was that unevangelical? Or think of Pascal, when his eyes were opened, elated to such an extent that his sister had to ask what his spiritual director would think of such a *gleeful* penitent? Or, above all, think of Jesus and the disciples, these children of the bride-chamber, who lived one day at a time, and found each as it came the very flower and glory of days. I suspect that true souls are always hilarious, and that one step towards the restoration of the evangel in the Church would be the breaking of this tradition and the letting in of the sun. Dr. Davidson says of Mohammed that he had that indispensable requisite of a great man, he could laugh with all his might. And in a follower of Jesus something like that is still desirable.[1]

III.

The Resulting Faith.

"And his disciples believed on him."

There is nothing more remarkable in the Gospel of St. John than the clearness with which it brings before us the moral side of miracles. They are emphatically "signs" or "works"—facts which lead us to look deeper into the mysteries of life as samples of the silent, unnoticed action of God. And they are represented not only as signs and works, but also as tests of faith. Christ manifested His glory, "and his disciples believed on him."

1. "*His disciples* believed on him." It is not said that those who were before unbelieving were overpowered by what they saw and forced into faith; it is said only that those who had already followed Christ cast themselves, so to speak, upon Him with an absolute trust when they recognized the workings of His Divine power. The outward event might be disregarded or

[1] W. M. Macgregor, *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, 115.

explained away or cavilled at; the inner meaning was discernible only to the spiritual eye. The wedding guests for the most part, so far as we know, went away unconscious of the meaning of what they had witnessed, but the disciples believed.

2. "His disciples *believed*." Those who had welcomed Christ and followed Him now believed on Him. Their "belief" was a response of the soul to Him as one having the glory of God. It was not necessarily a full recognition of Jesus for what He was, but it was the personal trust that makes ever-increasing knowledge possible. And as the disciples' faith grew, so would their spiritual insight and understanding deepen more and more.

(1) This was not the beginning of their faith. Jesus had already cast the unearthly spell of His purity and beauty upon them, and drawn them to His side as the magnet draws the iron. They had forsaken all and followed Him.

(2) Nor was it the miracle that first produced their faith. They had already believed, not as the result of any display of supernatural power, but before any miracle had been done. Had it not been for this preparedness as the result of previous belief, the miracle of Cana, wrought as it was, so quietly and naturally, would not have produced such a profound impression upon the disciples. But brought thus into a state of quickened sympathy with Him, they understood the significance of the miracle, and their faith was rewarded and confirmed by it. They knew more perfectly who He was, and confided in Him more implicitly. The miracle was wrought in themselves; the water of their previous weak faith was changed into the wine of a nobler, a more devoted faith, which, working by love, purified their hearts, and enabled them to overcome every obstacle and temptation as they followed Jesus in the way.

(3) The disciples did not stop at this rudimentary state of faith, in which they merely believed in Jesus. They continued to believe in Him; but to this they added in later life many and illustrious spiritual attainments. But great as were their attainments in faith, knowledge, righteousness, and grace in after life, they were all rendered possible by this simple faith.

¶ Saint Cyran was always dwelling on the difference between bodily and spiritual medicine. A broken leg might heal com-

pletely, or a fever be successfully fought; and then, as he says with a stray touch of humour, the doctor would be much annoyed if his former patients took to haunting his consulting-room. But in spiritual medicine the patient never got free of his Physician, nor was it fitting that he should.[1]

3. "His disciples believed *on him*." Only in two places does this expression "on him" occur in all the Synoptic Gospels; and the Apostle Paul, whose vocabulary it more closely resembles than that of any other Scripture writer, but very rarely uses it. It denotes the absolute transference of trust from one's self to another. To believe on or in a man means so much more than simply to believe him. In believing a man we confide in the mere truthfulness of his lips; we believe that he is incapable of telling a falsehood. But in believing on or in a man, we trust the man's whole being and life, we confide in himself. The disciples of Jesus not only believed the words of Jesus, from whose lips no guile could come; they believed in Himself as the fulfilment of all their hopes and expectations, their highest ideal of the truth. A deeper confidence than they could have in themselves they had in Him.

(1) Perhaps there were those present who believed the miracle of whom it could not be said that they believed *on Him*. The faith of the disciples had passed from a belief in the act to a belief in the Actor. Jesus Himself stood prominently forth in their faith. As yet they knew little of Him and of His future plans; He had not told them who He was; He had given them little, if any, teaching; and thus their faith at this time was not enriched with the larger conceptions of Him which they had at a later period. It was an elementary faith; but it had the most vital and vitalizing element, because it was faith *on Him*.

(2) The ground of their faith was the knowledge they had acquired of Jesus. Faith finds its root in knowledge; credulity in ignorance. Jesus had let a little of His glory shine forth in a beautiful act of power. That act gave a clue to a right knowledge of Him. By it the disciples were able to form some conception of the kind of Being He was. And that knowledge enabled them to have faith in Him. Jesus wrought the faith by the agency of His glory; without this self-revelation the faith would never have

[1] Viscount St. Cyres, *Pascal*, 230.

come; the faith was thus His gift. And because of what they did know of Him, they believed in Him for what they did not know. That is the way in which we, by understanding something of God, can believe in Him where we do not understand Him.

¶ Christ required then, as He requires now, a faith based on reason and not on miracles. Consequently, a miracle does not prove the truth of a doctrine; for the doctrine must first commend itself to the conscience as *good*, and only then can the miracle seal it as *Divine*. "Miracula sine doctrinâ nihil valent." Therefore we must look in every miracle, not only for the Divine power, but also for the Divine wisdom and goodness. A miracle is not a wonder, but a sign, so that the inward meaning is more important than the outward form.[1]

4. If the disciples believed on Him when they saw Him furnish these wedding guests with wine, shall we not believe, who know that through all these ages He has furnished the pained and the poor with hope and consolation, the desolate and broken-hearted with restoring sympathy, the outcast with the knowledge of God's love, the sinner with pardon, with heaven, and with God? Is not the glory He showed at this marriage in Cana precisely what still attracts us to Him with confidence and affection? Can we not wholly trust this Lord who has a perfect sympathy guiding His Divine power, who brings the presence of God into all the details of human life, who enters into all our joys and all our sorrows, and is ever watchful to anticipate our every need, and supply it out of His inexhaustible and all-sufficient fulness? Happy they who know His heart as His mother knew it, and are satisfied to name their want and leave it with Him.

¶ All power, properly so called, is wise and benevolent. There may be capacity in a drifting fire-ship to destroy a fleet; there may be venom enough in a dead body to infect a nation:—but which of you, the most ambitious, would desire a drifting kinghood, robed in consuming fire, or a poison-dipped sceptre whose touch was mortal? There is no true potency, remember, but that of help; nor true ambition, but ambition to save.[2]

[1] G. F. Terry, *The Old Theology in the New Age*, 179.
[2] Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive* (*Works*, xviii. 478).

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A New Beginning.

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.—John iii. 5.

1. It is impossible for any one to read or hear these words without remembering what solemn words they have been to multitudes of our fellow-men. There are hardly any words that Christ ever spoke which have more fascinated and held the hearts of earnest men.

¶ In a letter from Whitefield to Benjamin Franklin, dated 1752, occur these words: "As I find you growing more and more famous in the learned world I would recommend to your diligent and unprejudiced study the mystery of the new birth. It is a most important study, and, when mastered, will richly answer all your pains. I bid you, my friend, remember that One at whose bar we shall both presently appear hath solemnly declared that without it we shall in no wise see His Kingdom."

2. Born again! The new birth! Oh, these old words which so many souls have puzzled over and could not understand, and yet have been fascinated by so that they could not let them go! In silent chambers souls have agonized and wondered, "What is it to be born again?" In silent chambers souls, conscious of a richer and fuller life, have dreamed and questioned timidly: "Is it possible, then, that this is the new birth? Have we come any nearer to an answer to it all to-day? Have we passed from the shallow life to the profound, from the unspiritual to the spiritual, from the first life to the second?"[1]

¶ How was it that he, who in 1727 could not move a village, after 1739 could shake three kingdoms? How did it come to pass that the teacher who was driven out of a little colony as a mere human irritant became the teacher, the comforter, the trusted leader of whole generations? The explanation certainly does not lie in any personal gifts of body or brain Wesley

[1] Phillips Brooks, *Seeking Life*, 208.

possessed. These were exactly the same at both stages of his career. Wesley at Wroote was twenty-five years of age. He had then the scholar's brain, the zealot's fire, the orator's tongue; and he failed—failed consciously and completely. "I preached much," is his own record, "but saw no fruits of my labour." Wesley, again, in Charleston, was thirty-two years of age. At no stage of his life did he show a higher passion of zeal, or more methodical and resolute industry; a self-sacrifice so nearly heroic in temper. And yet he failed! But something came into his life by the gate of his conversion, something he never lost, something which transfigured his career. It was a strange gift of power—power that used Wesley's natural gifts—his tough body, his keen intellect, his resolute will—as instruments, but which was more than these. Who looks on Wesley's life as a whole, and sees on one side of a particular date doubt, weakness, and defeat, and on the other side certainty, gladness, and matchless power, cannot doubt that the secret of Wesley's career lies in the spiritual realm. Wesley's story is simply one embodied, historic, and overwhelming demonstration of the truth of what is called the Evangelical reading of Christianity.[1]

3. Many are perplexed, as Nicodemus was. They understand religion on its educational and tangible side; but the doctrine of regeneration, of conversion, perplexes and offends them. They will consent to the faith of Christ, to the Church of Christ, excepting this one doctrine, which is of its very essence. Yet what of the fact? Only as our interior eyes are enlightened can we see the Kingdom of God; only as our mind, affections, conscience, and will are raised and energized by the Holy Spirit can we enter into that Kingdom and share its righteousness and blessedness. Such is the teaching of the Master, and tens of thousands in all generations testify to the truth of His teaching. They are conscious that they have experienced this very change; they know it as a fact, the most glorious fact of their history. They have been transformed in the spirit of their mind; they henceforth walk in newness of life. These witnesses will vary much as to what brought it all about, as to their recognition of the time and place of awakening, and many features of the experiences through which they passed; but concerning the substantial fact itself, that the Spirit of God has imparted to them a higher life, given them a clean heart, and renewed within

[1] W. H. Fitchett *Wesley and his Century* 281.

them a right spirit, they bear testimony to it as the most indubitable and blessed fact of their life. Let there be no mistake about it; that penitent men are turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, is one of the best authenticated facts in the history of the race.

¶ There are a great many things that I cannot explain and cannot reason out, and yet that I believe. I heard a commercial traveller say that he had heard that the ministry and religion of Jesus Christ were matters of revelation and not of investigation. "When it pleased God to reveal his Son in me," says St. Paul (Gal. i. 15, 16). There was a party of young men together, going up the country; and on their journey they made up their minds not to believe anything they could not reason out. An old man heard them, and presently he said, "I heard you say you would not believe anything you could not reason out." "Yes," they said, "that is so." "Well," he said, "coming down on the train to-day, I noticed some geese, some sheep, some swine, and some cattle, all eating grass. Can you tell me by what process that same grass was turned into hair, feathers, bristles, and wool? Do you believe it is a fact?" "Oh yes," they said, "we cannot help believing that, though we fail to understand it." "Well," said the old man, "I cannot help believing in Jesus Christ. And I cannot help believing in the regeneration of man, when I see men who have been reclaimed, when I see men who have been reformed."[1]

4. Let us remember the occasion upon which the words were spoken. Our Lord at the very beginning of His ministry exercised His vital powers to heal those who were sick with all manner of diseases; and this He did in order to manifest His sympathy with human suffering, to win confidence for Himself and His message, to illustrate the operations of grace in renewing the life and vigour of the soul, and to reveal in living form, by prophecy, the coming time when the former things shall have passed away, and no one shall ever again know pain, and cry out, "I am sick!"

His works of healing not only touched the people but moved thoughtful men very deeply. One of them, a member of the Great Council, came to Him for more light. He came alone, secretly, in the night. He was no coward. He was not yet convinced, not yet ready to commit himself. He had much to

[1] D. L. Moody, *The Way to God*, 45.

sacrifice should he become a disciple of this young Rabbi. Not until he could be sure that he had more to gain than to lose would he be able to decide. At last, when all had forsaken Him and fled, it was this unknown follower of Jesus who was ready to perform the sacred rites of burial.

His words, as he first spoke, were these: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these signs which thou doest, except God be with him." Jesus immediately replied, not to these words, but to the inmost thought of the man, which had moved him to seek His presence and turn a listening ear to His teachings: "Except a man be born anew, he cannot so much as perceive the kingdom of God." Nicodemus confessed that he could not understand, and then strove to draw the Master out: "Surely one cannot return to the single, throbbing cell of life, and grow, and be born anew? Thou dost not speak words that have their ordinary meanings; what, then, dost Thou mean by the use of them?" Then Jesus explained: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." By the word "flesh" Jesus evidently meant our nature as it comes into the world by the first birth, therefore what the Apostle calls the "natural"; for He sets the flesh over against the spirit as the Apostle sets the natural over against the spiritual. A man, therefore, who comes into the world in the fulness of human nature, made in the image of God, and after His likeness, must pass through a change which is really a birth *anew*. And this is but the quickening life, the inspiring breath of the Divine Spirit, which, confluent with his own spirit, gives him life abundantly. The growth and progress of man, then, made in God's image and after His likeness, into His full, complete, glorious, blessed likeness, involves a transition which may be called a birth *anew*.

Now one thing that strikes us about Christ's conversation with Nicodemus is its representative character. The situation is always recurring wherever the call to higher truth comes face to face with mere traditional teaching or hereditary precept. Nicodemus is always with us in one shape or another. He is the embodiment of religious conventionalism and social respectability. He is always ready with his rationalistic efforts at solving spiritual mysteries; he is always trying to reduce the mysterious

to the common-place. He has his dwelling among current traditions and rules and interpretations, and he will not look beyond them. How can a man be born again except by recurrence to some improbable natural method? And Christ's answer is always the same: You must be born again—not in the lower world, but into a higher world; you must be born again, the Spirit must touch your spirit, and you must leave rule and tradition and interpretations behind you. Morally you must be born again into the Kingdom of the Father, where God is loved and trusted and dealt with at first hand and communed with.

¶ Speaking of the writer of the "Eikon Basilike," Carlyle said that he was the most portentously self-righteous mortal ever extant in this planet; that seemed to say to the Almighty, in place of asking for His grace and mercy, "Oh, Lord, I have attained to such a pitch of heavenly perfection that I fear it is not even in Thy power to make me any better than I am; but if at the time Thou shouldst find an opportunity for adding a little finish and perfectness to my many excellences I should feel obliged to Thee." [1]

5. In religious circles in Jerusalem there was nothing being talked of but the Kingdom of God which John the Baptist had declared to be at hand. And when Jesus told Nicodemus that in order to enter this Kingdom he must be born again, He told him just what John had been telling the whole people. John had assured them that, though the King was in their midst, they must not suppose they were already within His Kingdom by being the children of Abraham. He excommunicated the whole nation, and taught them that it was something different from natural birth that gave admission to God's Kingdom. And just as they had compelled Gentiles to be baptized, and to submit to other arrangements when they wished to partake of Jewish privileges, so John compelled them to be baptized. The Gentile who wished to become a Jew had to be symbolically born again. He had to be baptized, going down under the cleansing waters, washing away his old and defiled life, being buried by baptism, disappearing from men's sight as a Gentile, and rising from the water as a new man. He was thus born of water, and this time born, not a Gentile, but a Jew. As the Gentile had to be naturalized and

[1] *Mrs. Brookfield and Her Circle*, ii. 436.

born again that he might rank as a child of Abraham, and enjoy the external privileges of the Jew, so must the Jew himself be born again if he is to rank as a child of God and to belong to the Kingdom of God. He must submit to the double baptism of water and of the Spirit—of water for the pardon and cleansing of past sin and defilement, of the Spirit for the inspiration of a new and holy life.

¶ The Jewish doctors, it is said, not uncommonly described the Gentile as one who became a little child, who began his life anew, when he was received by baptism into the privileges of their outer court. If so, Nicodemus must have been familiar with the expression; but it must have been to him, and to most who availed themselves of it, a mere figure of rhetoric—one of those counters which pass among religious people, which have a certain value at first, but which become at length so depreciated that they serve no purpose but to impose on those who take and those who give them. However little Nicodemus might know of Jesus, he did know that He was not resorting to figures of rhetoric—that if He spoke of a birth, He meant a birth; and he must have perceived that what He said did not apply to sinners of the Gentiles, but to him, the religious ruler of the Jews. It was, therefore, a good and healthy sign, a proof of the power of the new Teacher, that he forgot the conventionalisms of the Sanhedrim, and spoke out coarsely and naturally, as a peasant might have done. Our Lord, surely, passed this judgment upon him; for, instead of rebuking him for his question, He meets it in the most direct manner possible: "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The object of Nicodemus in coming to ask Him about His kingdom is still kept prominently forward; but there is a noticeable change in our Lord's words. He had spoken of *seeing* the Kingdom of God; He now speaks of *entering* into it. Each expression may, unquestionably does, involve the other; still they are distinct. To *see* a kingdom is to have an apprehension of its reality and of its nature; to *enter* into a kingdom is to become a subject of it.[1]

6. Our Lord speaks of the second birth as completed by two agencies, water and the Spirit. To make the one of these merely the symbol of the other is to miss His meaning. The Baptist baptized with water for the remission of sins, but he was always careful to disclaim power to baptize with the Holy Ghost. His

[1] F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of John*, 90.

baptism with water was of course symbolical; that is to say, the water itself exercised no spiritual influence, but merely represented to the eye what was invisibly done in the heart. But that which it symbolized was not the life-giving influence of the Holy Spirit, but the washing away of sin from the soul. Assurance of pardon John was empowered to give. Those who humbly submitted to his baptism with confession of their sins went from it forgiven and cleansed. But more than that was needed to make them new men—and yet, more he could not give. For that which would fill them with new life they must go to a Greater than he, who alone could bestow the Holy Ghost.

These, then, are the two great incidents of the second birth—the pardon of sin, which is preparatory, and which cuts our connection with the past; the communication of life by the Spirit of God, which fits us for the future. Both of these are represented by Christian baptism because in Christ we have both; but those who were baptized by John's baptism were only *prepared* for receiving Christ's Spirit by receiving the forgiveness of their sins.

¶ This passage brings out the deep truth of which Baptism was afterwards made an outward and visible exponent. Here we are shown the need of an external acceptance of promise and position, and of these being sealed on us, and still further the need of the Spirit dwelling in our hearts to make this outward confession a reality, and give us power for practising it. And so, be it ever remembered, the mere form of baptism, unless the Holy Spirit be actually in the heart, can avail nothing. It is but, as it were, a husk, and can be no more, but the gift of the Holy Spirit is open to all; and as we read this passage, and are perhaps for the moment tempted to think it excludes some, or even ourselves, from the Kingdom, we should put beside it that other glorious passage of promise: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke xi. 13).[1]

¶ Imagine not infants, but crowds of grown-up persons already changed in heart and feelings; their "life hidden with Christ in God," losing their personal consciousness in the laver of regeneration; rising again from its depths into the light of heaven, in communion with God and nature; met as they rose

[1] J. H. Rogers, *The "Verily, Verilys" of Christ*, 28.

from the bath with the white raiment, which is "the righteousness of the saints," and ever after looking back on that moment as the instant of their new birth, of the putting off of the old man, and the putting on of Christ. Baptism was to them the figure of death, burial, and resurrection all in one, the most apt expression of the greatest change that can pass upon man, like the sudden change into another life when we leave the body.[1]

7. We now see what our Lord demanded of Nicodemus. It was that he should enter into an entirely new relationship to God. There were two classes of people, "the righteous" and "the sinners." The difference between them was due to their attitude to the Law. The righteous "knew" the Law, and so counted themselves right with God; the sinners did not "know" it; and the judgment which the righteous pronounced on them was, "This people who knoweth not the law are cursed."

Now when Nicodemus came to Jesus, instead of being confirmed in his righteousness, or perhaps told what omissions he had to make good in order that his obedience to the Law might be perfect, he was informed that the whole framework of his life was wrong. His relation had been to the Law, not to the Person of God. He had obeyed God as a servant; he had not loved Him as a son. The whole structure of righteousness which he had built up laboriously, by rigid observance of the precepts of the Law, had therefore to be taken down. He had to begin at the beginning again; or, to use the inimitable figure of our Lord, he had to be "born anew."

The New Birth, then, is the entrance on a new attitude towards God, the attitude of a loving son to a Father instead of that of an obedient servant to a lawgiver. This new attitude is entered upon by repentance on the part of the sinner (however "righteous" the sinner may have thought himself to be), and the gift of the Spirit on God's part. It thus involves three things—first and chiefly a new attitude to God; next, and as belonging to that, a new attitude to the past, or Repentance; and, last, a new attitude to the future, or Spiritual Life.

¶ I doubt if there is a doctrine of Jesus which modern men so thoroughly disbelieve as that which staggered Nicodemus nineteen centuries ago. I know just how men roast it over the

[1] B. Jowett, *The Epistles of St. Paul*, i. 291.

slow fires of their sarcasm. I have watched them score it with the keenest infidel blades. I have seen it pilloried and hung in effigy before an admiring crowd. To all of which there is just this to say—and I believe it can be substantiated with vital truth—that of all the Master's doctrines none is more self-evident and philosophical than this. There was nothing in it to bewilder Nicodemus or any man of us. Jesus touched the bedrock of common-sense when He insisted that there is no way into His Kingdom except through "a second birth."[1]

I.

A New Attitude to God.

1. To be "born again" means to get back to our childhood. Who has not cried, "Oh, that I were a child again! If only I could start life over again, free from all the errors and disasters, free from all the stains and soils of the past!" We may, we can. We can get back to childhood again. For Naaman there was the river that washed away the leprosy of the flesh; for us "there is a fountain opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness," where the soul may be washed clean. To get back to childhood, to get the weight of sin removed, to start anew —Jesus says we can. Science tells us that all that is wanted to create a new star is a start. There are the vast floating nebulae. If they will only cohere at some little point, then the globe will begin to form, and presently you will have a star. All that we want is the point of contact, the cohering point; then the new life will begin to stir in us, and the new soul begin to grow into the starry image of Christ.

2. When a child is born in common life it is born into a sonship; it becomes at once a member of the family; and there and then, before it has done a thing to merit it, the little child has a right to its father's and mother's love. It is exactly the same with the new birth of the child of God. Every person born of the Spirit is born into a sonship, and is received at once as a beloved child into the family of God. This is what St. John teaches us (John i. 12): "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name"; and what St. Paul teaches (Gal. iv. 4, 5): "When the fulness of

[1] G. C. Peck, *Ringing Questions*, 161.

the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."

3. Now this new attitude to God, which is here called a new birth, is *necessary*—" Ye must be born again." It is necessary for the acknowledged sinner, since his attitude is openly and admittedly wrong. But it is necessary also for every person whose highest aim in life has been to do his duty. He must be born anew as a son and begin to live a life of love to God as his Father. The Kingdom of God, as far as man is concerned, is a state in which we are in our *right relation* to Him. All irrational creatures obey God and do His will: the sun runs his course with an exactness and punctuality we cannot rival; the grace and strength of many of the lower animals, their marvellous instincts and aptitudes, are so superior to anything in ourselves that we cannot even comprehend them. But what we have as our speciality is to render to God a willing service; to understand His purposes and enter sympathetically into them. The lower creatures obey a law impressed upon their nature; they cannot sin; their performance of God's will is a tribute to the power which made them so skilfully, but it lacks all conscious recognition of His worthiness to be served and all knowledge of His object in creation. It is God serving Himself: He made them so, and therefore they do His will. So it is with men who merely obey their nature: they may do kindly, noble, heroic actions, but they lack all reference to God; and, however excellent these actions are, they give no guarantee that the men who do them would sympathize with God in all things, and do His will gladly.

¶ " In the evening I got into a very interesting conversation with Macleod, the blacksmith of the *Pioneer*. He is a Scot from Campsie, has a true west country twang, and, like most of our countrymen, is far better informed on many subjects of the highest importance than nine-tenths of those among whom he lives. I found him to be a Christian, and the manner of his calling was one of the most singular that has ever been heard of. He was for some time resting on a righteousness of his own, trusting to a moral life and his general goodness, but frequently with misgivings as to the security of his foundations. At times he felt that the sand on which he was resting was moving. When

at Johanna on board the *Lynx*, he was sent along with a party to assist the *Enchantress*, which had got ashore. In the subsequent destruction of the vessel there was much confusion. Kicking about the deck, he found some of Spurgeon's sermons. In reading a few sentences casually where the book opened, he met the expression: 'You need not carry your coals to Newcastle,' *i.e.* you need not bring *your* righteousness to the righteousness of Christ. He saw his mistake, and shortly afterwards found peace and rest on the true foundation." This blacksmith had made the very discovery that was made by Saul of Tarsus, Luther, Wesley, and Dr. Chalmers.[1]

(1) This new attitude is not required, of course, of such as are already subjects of the change; and many are so even from their earliest years, having grown up into Christ by the preventing or anticipating grace of their nurture in the Lord, so that they can recollect no time when Christ was not their love, and the currents of their inclination did not run toward His word and His cause. The case, however, of such is no real exception; and, besides this, there is even no semblance of exception. Intelligence, in fact, is not more necessary to our proper humanity than the second birth of this humanity to its salvation.

The first years of our existence are simply animal; then the life of a young man is not that of mere instinct, it is a life of passion, with mighty indignations, strong aversions. And then passing on through life we sometimes see a person in whom these things are merged; the instincts are there only for the support of existence; the passions are so ruled that they have become gentleness, and meekness, and love. Between these two extremes there must have been a middle point, when the life of sense, appetite, and passion, which *had* ruled, ceased to rule, and was ruled over by the life of the spirit; that moment, whether it be long or short, whether it come like the rushing mighty wind, or as the slow, gentle zephyr of the spring—whenever that moment was, then was the moment of spiritual regeneration.

¶ My conversion to the Lord Jesus might, with propriety, be compared to a mother rousing an infant with a kiss—a simile answering exactly to my experience in recalling it. Nor can I look back to that blessed epoch in my life without magnifying His tender loving-kindness who spared me the doubts, terrors,

[1] *Stewart of Lovedale*, 67.

and perplexities through which so many souls have passed ere they tasted "joy and peace in believing."[1]

¶ There is no outwardly marked act of religious decision in Rainy's youth, except that he was admitted as a communicant in the year 1842 in connection with St. John's congregation, the minister of which at the time was the Rev. Dr. Thomas Brown. He was a notably regular attendant at public worship. But we have merely these outward facts. No one now survives who could give any report of his religious impressions at this period and he has himself left no indication of them. I venture, however, to recall in this connection a remark he once made to me to the effect that Tolstoi's way of stating the Christian life lacked something of saneness and even his way of exposing sinful life something of wholesomeness, probably because his conversion unfortunately had had to be so violent a reaction. Robert Rainy's decisive religious experience, it may be safely said (if one may so far presume as to characterize it), was not so much a reaction as a realization—that equally genuine and equally evangelical type of conversion (though the word conversion seems inappropriate to describe it) which consists in the love and grace of God in Jesus Christ becoming, and that perhaps not at any special time but with the natural development of mind and heart and will, something personal and something vital. A Christian life thus originated is at once supernatural and normal. It is the Christian life of one who not only has been converted but has been converted and become as a little child, with a child's natural trust in its father, a child's sheer happiness in goodness, a child's instinct of recoil from the impure. This was the note of Principal Rainy's religion to the end, and it seems to have been so from the beginning.[2]

(2) One reason why the new attitude must be entered on by everybody is that it is the entrance into a new order of being. It is the passage from the natural to the spiritual. That fact gives the figure of the "new birth" peculiar appropriateness, though the figure must not be urged too far, or treated literally. The passage from the natural to the spiritual is beyond a man's own effort; it is accomplished by co-operation with the Spirit of God.

In this world we find a number of creatures which have what is known as animal life. They can work, and feel, and, in a

[1] *The Life, Labours, and Writings of Cæsar Malan*, 37.

[2] P. C. Simpson, *The Life of Principal Rainy*, i. 25.

fashion, think. They have wills, and certain dispositions, and distinctive characteristics. Every creature that has animal life has a certain nature according to its kind, and determined by its parentage; and this nature which the animal receives from its parents determines from the first the capabilities and sphere of the animal's life. The mole cannot soar in the face of the sun like the eagle; neither can the bird that comes out of the eagle's egg burrow like the mole. No training can possibly make the tortoise as swift as the antelope, or the antelope as strong as the lion. If a mole began to fly and enjoy the sunlight it must be counted a new kind of creature, and no longer a mole. The very fact of its passing certain limitations shows that another nature has somehow been infused into it. Beyond its own nature no animal can act. You might as well attempt to give the eagle the appearance of the serpent as try to teach it to crawl. Each kind of animal is by its birth endowed with its own nature, fitting it to do certain things, and making other things impossible. So is it with us: we are born with certain faculties and endowments, with a certain nature; and just as all animals, without receiving any new, individual, supernatural help from God, can act according to their nature, so can we. We, being human, have a high and richly-endowed animal nature, a nature that leads us not only to eat, drink, sleep, and fight like the lower animals, but also to think and to love, and which, by culture and education, can enjoy a much richer and wider life than the lower creatures. Men need not be in the Kingdom of God in order to do much that is admirable, noble, lovely, because their nature as animals fits them for that. If we were to exist at all as a race of animals superior to all others, then all this is just what must be found in us. Irrespective of any kingdom of God at all, irrespective of any knowledge of God or reference to Him, we have a life in this world, and a nature fitting us for it. And it is this we have by our natural birth, a place among our kind, an animal life. The first man, from whom we all descend, was, as St. Paul profoundly says, "a living soul," that is to say, an animal, a living human being; but he had not "a quickening spirit," could not give to his children spiritual life and make them children of God.

¶ It is not any doctrine of development or self-culture, no scheme of ethical practice or social reorganization; but it is

a salvation—a power moving on fallen humanity from above its level to regenerate, and so to save. The whole fabric is absurd, therefore, unless there was something to be done in man, and for him, that required a supernatural intervention. We can see, too, at a glance, that the style of the transaction is supernatural from the incarnate appearing onward. Were it otherwise — were Christianity a merely natural and earthly product—then it were only a fungus growing out of the world, and, with all its high pretensions, could have nothing more to do for the world than any other fungus for the heap on which it grows. The very name, *Jesus*, is a false pretence unless He has something to do for the race which the race cannot do for itself —something regenerative and new-creative—something fitly called a salvation.[1]

¶ The difference between the two positions is radical. Translating from the language of Science into that of Religion, the theory of Spontaneous Generation is simply that a man may become gradually better and better until in course of the process he reaches that quality of religious nature known as Spiritual Life. This Life is not something added *ab extra* to the natural man; it is the normal and appropriate development of the natural man. Biogenesis opposes to this the whole doctrine of Regeneration. The Spiritual Life is the gift of the Living Spirit. The spiritual man is no mere development of the natural man. He is a New Creation born from above. As well expect a hay infusion to become gradually more and more living, until in course of the process it reached Vitality, as expect a man by becoming better and better to attain the Eternal Life.[2]

¶ Truly there is only one way of being born again, regeneration by the power of the Spirit of God, the new heart; but there are many ways of conversion, of outwardly turning to the Lord, of taking the actual first step that shows on whose side we are. Regeneration is the sole work of the Holy Spirit in the human heart and soul, and is in every case one and the same. Conversion, on the other hand, bringing into play the action also of the human will, is never absolutely the same perhaps in even two souls—as like and yet as different as are the faces of men.[3]

[1] H. Bushnell, *The New Life*, 60.
[2] H. Drummond, *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, 65.
[3] *John G. Paton*, ii. 217.

II.

A New Attitude to the Past.

The new attitude to God involves a new attitude to the past life. The "sinner" repents of his sin and turns to God in Christ; the "righteous" man passes from outward obedience to inward love, with a sense of his sinfulness as keen as that of any acknowledged sinner.

¶ When men talk of the abolition of conversion and of the imitation of Jesus Christ, they forget that there is a past which must be atoned for. Look at it this way. Supposing I have run up an account with a tradesman, and I owe him quite a large sum of money. I call at his place of business and I tell him that in future all my transactions with him will be on a strictly cash basis, that I will pay for everything as I order or receive it. I say nothing about the money which I owe him, but I point out that as I intend to pay cash in future we start all square! Do you think you could find a tradesman willing to agree to this? No. "What about the money you already owe?" he would ask. "Payment of cash in the future will never wipe out the debt of the past, and not until that is cleared off can we start square."[1]

1. We can verify our Lord's assertion by honestly searching the depths of our own hearts, and looking at ourselves in the light of God. Think what is meant when we say, "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." Think of that absolute purity, that, to us, awful aversion from all that is evil, from all that is sinful. Think of what sort of men they must be who can see the Lord. Are we fit to pass that threshold? Are we fit to gaze into that Face? Is it possible that we should have fellowship with Him? If we rightly meditate upon two facts, the holiness of God and our own characters, we shall feel that Jesus Christ has truly stated the case when He says, "Ye must be born again." Unless we can get ourselves radically changed, there is no Heaven for us; there is no fellowship with God for us. We must stand before Him, and feel that a great gulf is fixed between us and Him.

¶ Self-dissatisfaction is with most of us our one necessity. Do you remember Browning's verses on the pictures in Florence,

[1] *A Father's Letters to his Son*, 128.

that tremendous and thrilling contrast which he draws between the great Christian pictures in their manifest incompleteness and the early Greek statues with their manifest completeness of beauty and grace? Many of us have felt the contrast. It would be well for us all if we fought our way with him through the depression to which the thought sometimes gives birth. How vividly he sets forth the truth that a sense of incompleteness is the first condition of completeness! You must ever be born again to higher completeness if you would believe in a life to come, and the very fact that you recognize your imperfection is the best thing about you. It is finiteness in view and purpose that is our besetting sin. It was finiteness of view and purpose that gave to the old classic statues a chance to seem complete, and their very finiteness is the proof of their utter incompleteness; out of that came at once their possibilities and their impossibilities.[1]

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start—What if we so small
Be greater and grander the while than they?
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.

To-day's brief passion limits their range;
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect—how else? they shall never change:
We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
The better! What's come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven.

2. How close and personal are the lessons which we may learn from our Lord's treatment of Nicodemus! He had lost a great opportunity in resisting the teaching of John. The "way of the Lord" would have been prepared in his heart had he listened to the desert preacher. He would not now have been sitting

[1] R. Eyton, *The Glory of the Lord*, 25.

bewildered and amazed at the teaching of Jesus. Neglect of light and truth is always punished. Every duty we omit obscures some truth we should have known. As one of Browning's characters says—

I see a duty and do it not, therefore I see no higher.

We must be faithful to the light which comes to us, if we would be ready for the greater light when it arises.

Our deeds still travel with us from afar,
And what we have been makes us what we are.

We can never tell how much we lose by unfaithfulness to the truths which touch the conscience or to the light which shows the way of duty. The demands from which we shrink or which we refuse are not always done with when we turn away from them. They meet us again. The sin we know, the duty we have neglected, the right which we have disobeyed, present themselves to us again. They have to be confessed, performed, obeyed, before we can enter the kingdom of life and peace.

(1) The first evidence of the reality of the new attitude to the past is that the sinner *ceases from sin.* This is the meaning of the words of St. John (1 John iii. 9): "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." The passage of which this forms a part is sometimes quoted as proving the sinlessness of all those who are partakers of what is called higher life. The sixth verse especially is thus appealed to. But these passages do not refer to any particular class who have attained this higher life of which they speak, but to all, according to the sixth verse, who have either seen or known Christ, and, according to the ninth verse, to all who have been born again. If the passage teaches the perfect sinlessness in thought, word, and act of any individual, it is of every one that has been born of the Spirit. But that is not the meaning of the passage. The tense employed in the Greek is the tense employed to denote habit, and the word is that made use of by St. John himself to express habitual practice. The word rendered "commit" in 1 John iii. 9 is the same word as is rendered "keep" in John vii. 19: "None of you keepeth the law"; and the one verse may explain the other. As none of the Jews kept the law, so those who have been born again do not

keep sin. With their whole heart they have given up their wicked ways; their habits are changed; they have abandoned their former ways; they hate the sins they once loved, and they prove by their life and conversation that a real change has taken place in their heart. That this is the true meaning of the passage is proved beyond all doubt by the tenth verse, "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

¶ A man lying drunk was accosted by Dr. Kidd, who asked him what he was and why he was lying there. "Do you not know me, Doctor? I am ane o' your converts," was the reply. "Very like my handiwork," rejoined the Doctor; "for if God had converted you, you wouldn't be where you are."[1]

(2) Another sign of the reality of our new attitude to our past life is that we obtain a clear *victory over sin.* It is impossible to overestimate the terrific hold that sin has on the natural man. It grips him with such a grasp that he has no better hope of escape than a fly has in a spider's web. But when a person is reconciled to God through the precious blood of Christ, and born in Him into the family of God, the web is broken, the chains are loosed, the conqueror is conquered, and the captive free. Look at the words in 1 John v. 4, 5: "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" The change therefore is not merely one in thought or feeling, nor only an alteration of opinion; it is essentially practical, and the result of it is that the dishonest man becomes honest; the drunkard becomes sober; the rough-tempered man gentle; the corrupt man pure; and the immoral profligate is transformed into the humble, holy, repentant, and God-fearing servant of the Lord.

¶ I would not for one minute have you suppose that God's children are perfect, and without spot or stain or defilement in themselves. Do not go away and say I told you they were pure as angels and never made a slip or stumble. The same St. John in the same Epistle declares: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not

[1] James Stark, *Dr. Kidd of Aberdeen*, 277.

in us." But I do say that in the matter of breaking God's commandments, every one that is born again is quite a new man. He no longer takes a light and cool and easy view of sin; he no longer judges of it with the world's judgment; he no longer thinks a little swearing, or a little Sabbath-breaking, or a little fornication, or a little drinking, or a little covetousness, small and trifling matters; but he looks on every sort of sin against God or man as exceeding abominable and damnable in the Lord's sight, and, as far as in him lies, he hates it and abhors it, and desires to be rid of it root and branch, with his whole heart and mind and soul and strength.[1]

¶ Immediately upon his conversion the conviction came clearly to the scholar's mind that his opium-habit must at once be broken. There seems to have been no parleying about it. Ever since he first entered the missionary's household his conscience had troubled him on the subject. Mr. Hill's kind but sorrowful words would not leave him, and their reproach was burnt into his soul.

"Mr. Hsi," he had said, "you are a distinguished member of a scholarly family. I deeply regret to see you brought to so enfeebled a condition through opium. If you do not cleanse yourself, how can you be an example to others?"

But at that time he knew no power that could enable him to cleanse himself from the degrading vice. Now all was different. He belonged to Christ, and there could be no doubt as to the will of his new Master. It was thoroughly in keeping with the character of the man to come to this clear decision at once. Of course, he knew well what leaving off opium-smoking would involve. But there was no shrinking; no attempt at half measures. He saw it must be sacrificed at once, entirely, and for ever.

Then came the awful conflict. It was as though the great enemy of souls, seeing his prisoner escaping, fell back upon this opium-habit as an invincible chain with which to bind him. How critical was the struggle, how momentous the issues, Hsi himself hardly realized. Upon its outcome all his future power and usefulness depended. As angels lingered near the Saviour tempted in the wilderness, may we not believe the watchful ones lingered near Hsi in the hour of his great need? By the merciful aid of God he was at last victorious.[2]

(3) Another sign is that we gain the *victory over the world.* What is the natural man?—a wretched slave to the opinion of

[1] J. C. Ryle, *The Christian Race*, 44. [2] J. E. Hellier, *Life of David Hill*, 136.

this world. What the world says is right he follows and approves; what the world says is wrong he renounces and condemns also. How shall I do what my neighbours do not do? What will men say of me if I become more strict than they? This is the natural man's argument. But from all this he that is born again is free. He is no longer led by the praise or the blame, the laughter or the frown, of children of Adam like himself. He no longer thinks that the sort of religion which everybody about him professes must necessarily be right. He no longer considers "What will the world say?" but "What does God command?"

¶ I fear that unworldliness is almost conspicuous by its absence from our Church members to-day. The world and the Church are so interlocked in unholy wedlock that it is scarcely possible to say where the Church ends and where the world begins. There was a time when the world and the Church were widely separated, in the days when the early Christians carried their cross for Jesus; but now the world has become religious, or which amounts to the same thing, the Church has become worldly and the power of God has almost left us.[1]

(4) *The whole man is changed.* "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." There are new sorrows, new joys, new motives, new hopes, and new principles. All things are now seen under a new light, and so appear in a new colour; for "all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." That great reconciliation changes everything.

¶ It is inevitable that in such a moment there shall come into a man's mind a disgust for the past life,—the life of selfishness, the life of low ideals, the life of contentment with self and with selfish surroundings. There will come a disgust in the man's soul, and he will say, Is it possible that I was made for this, that this is the end and object of my life?—to go down town every morning and back again at night, to see more beautiful things year by year in my house, to gather my books about me, to learn a little more, to make myself more comfortable? Is it possible that this is the last expression of life, the outcome of all the Divine power that has been moving in the universe since the fiery clouds first filled the firmament? Is this the outcome of it? An animal, comfortable, respecting himself, respected of

[1] G. C. Grubb, *Unsearchable Riches*, 33.

his fellow-men? Is this the end? Is there no higher term of existence?[1]

¶ In a former chapter, we followed Father Paul Le Jeune on his winter roamings, with a band of Montagnais, among the forests on the northern boundary of Maine. Now Father Gabriel Druilletes sets forth on a similar excursion, but with one essential difference. Le Jeune's companions were heathen, who persecuted him day and night with their gibes and sarcasms. Those of Druilletes were all converts, who looked on him as a friend and a father. There were prayers, confessions, masses, and invocations of St. Joseph. They built their bark chapel at every camp, and no festival of the Church passed unobserved. On Good Friday they laid their best robe of beaver-skin on the snow, placed on it a crucifix, and knelt around it in prayer. What was their prayer? It was a petition for the forgiveness and the conversion of their enemies, the Iroquois. Those who know the intensity and tenacity of an Indian's hatred will see in this something more than a change from one superstition to another. An idea had been presented to the mind of the savage to which he had previously been an utter stranger. This is the most remarkable record of success in the whole body of the Jesuit *Relations*.[2]

¶ That noble old soul, Abraham, stood by me as an angel of God in sickness and in danger; he went at my side wherever I had to go; he helped me willingly to the last inch of strength in all that I had to do; and it was perfectly manifest that he was doing all this, not from mere human love, but for the sake of Jesus. That man had been a Cannibal in his heathen days, but by the grace of God there he stood verily a new creature in Christ Jesus. Any trust, however sacred or valuable, could be absolutely reposed in him; and in trial or danger, I was often refreshed by that old Teacher's prayers, as I used to be by the prayers of my saintly father in my childhood's home. No white man could have been a more valuable helper to me in my perilous circumstances, and no person, white or black, could have shown more fearless and chivalrous devotion.[3]

III.

A New Attitude to the Future.

We have seen that two things are essential to a member of the Kingdom—an outward act of allegiance, signifying repentance

[1] L. Parks, *The Winning of the Soul*, 182.

[2] Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America*, ii. 138.

[3] *John G. Paton*, i. 173.

and the acceptance of pardon, and an inward infusion of a new nature, which is indicated generally in chap. i. 12 by the words, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

¶ The Christianity of Clovis does not indeed produce any fruits of the kind usually looked for in a modern convert. We do not hear of his repenting ever so little of any of his sins, nor resolving to lead a new life in any the smallest particular. He had not been impressed with convictions of sin at the battle of Tolbiac; nor, in asking for the help of the God of Clotilde, had he felt or professed the remotest intention of changing his character, or abandoning his projects. What he was, before he believed in his queen's God, he only more intensely afterwards became, in the confidence of that before unknown God's supernatural help. His natural gratitude to the Delivering Power, and pride in its protection, added only fierceness to his soldiership, and deepened his political enmities with the rancour of religious indignation. No more dangerous snare is set by the fiends for human frailty than the belief that our own enemies are also the enemies of God; and it is perfectly conceivable to me that the conduct of Clovis might have been the more unscrupulous, precisely in the measure that his faith was more sincere.[1]

1. The new birth is the commencement of a new life. When the child is born it begins to live. No one can tell what that mysterious power is that we call life. It is something which all the science of the world is unable either to create or to define. Now as life commences in the child at the moment of its birth, so life commences in the soul when it is born again of the Spirit. The new birth is not merely a change of habit in a living soul, it is the commencement of life where there was none before. Thus the change when a person is born again is of the same character as that which took place in Adam when God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." There is the same difference in a person before the new birth and after it as there is between a beautiful statue and a living man. The statue may be perfect in form, but it is lifeless; the living person may be in some respects less beautiful in figure, but he is alive, and, being alive, can move, and think, and act for God.

[1] Ruskin, *The Bible of Amiens* (*Works*, xxxiii. 39).

¶ They tell me that some months ago a young Scotsman, who had been blind all his life, suddenly, by a marvellous operation, received his sight. They say that to that young man the world is another place. He wanders daily up and down in scenes with which you and I are so familiar that we do not even call them beautiful, and he sees a radiance which was hidden from ordinary everyday eyes that have gazed upon them all their lives. "Oh," he says, "the world is so beautiful! Who would have thought it was so beautiful?" Apt figure of the experience of the man who has found his God through the touch of a quickening Spirit.[1]

Lord, I was blind: I could not see
In Thy marred visage any grace;
But now the brightness of Thy face
In radiant vision dawns on me.

2. The fundamental difficulty in understanding the truth of the new birth and the new life lies in attempting to grasp it as a whole, and not in its special activities. All life grows vague if you try to understand its central essence. All life is clear, if you look at its special exhibitions. Ask us what life is in the most commonplace of living men, and we utterly fail to tell what it is in its unfound essence, or where it lurks among the hiding-places of the wondrous body; but when he lifts his hand and strikes, when he opens his mouth and talks, then in a moment we know unmistakably the living man. Now, so it is with the spiritual life. It is hard to tell just what the essence of the new Christian life is in any man. Theologians may contend over that, just as the physiologists contend over the essence of life in the body; but the new functions of the new existence, the way in which each separate power works differently, and each separate act is done differently, in the Christian's experience—this is not hard to trace.

(1) One of the features of the new life is *self-satisfaction.*—There is a bad and a good self-satisfaction. The bad self-satisfaction is only too common. It is what we call self-conceit. A man seems to himself sufficient for everything. There is no task that he will not accept. He does not look outside himself. The strength is in his own arm, which he can make strong as iron to subdue his foes; in his own heart, which he can make

[1] R. J. Campbell, *The Song of Ages*, 160.

hard as a rock to bear his troubles. For doing or enduring he needs nothing but himself. He can do anything. That self-conceit must die, or the man is a failure. Somehow or other, the man must learn that in himself he can do nothing. Then comes humility; and when in his humility he casts himself upon another strength, and expects to do nothing save in the power of God, then he is born again into a new self-satisfaction. To find himself taken by God; to feel that God is giving him His strength; to say, "I can do anything through Christ"; to face the world not in his own power, but in his Master's—that is the new, the deeper self-satisfaction.

¶ "The first effect of conversion," says Pascal, "is that we see the world and ourselves from a standpoint altogether new." New also are the feelings of relief after struggle, of peace and harmony, of strength suddenly acquired, that the triumph of unity brings in its train. The convert is caught up into a world of grandeurs hitherto unknown. While shackled to the *Moi* he was a prisoner in a strange land, cooped up in narrow bounds of space and time. Its chains once broken, he feels heir to immensities beyond all telling.[1]

¶ It is with man's Soul as it was with Nature: the beginning of Creation is—Light. Till the eye have vision, the whole members are in bonds. Divine moment, when over the tempest-tost Soul, as once over the wild-weltering Chaos, it is spoken: Let there be Light! Ever to the greatest that has felt such moment, is it not miraculous and God-announcing; even as, under simpler figures, to the simplest and least? The mad primeval Discord is hushed; the rudely-jumbled conflicting elements bind themselves into separate Firmaments: deep silent rock-foundations are built beneath; and the skyey vault with its everlasting Luminaries above: instead of a dark wasteful Chaos, we have a blooming, fertile, heaven-encompassed World.[2]

(2) Another feature is *Happiness.*—It is easy to recognize the two levels of happiness, and the way in which men pass from the upper and lighter into the profounder and more serious one. Is this man happy whom I see in the first flush of youth, just feeling his new powers, the red blood strong and swift in all his veins, the exquisite delight of trying his just-discovered faculties of taste and thought and skill filling each day with interest up to

[1] Viscount St. Cyres, *Pascal*, 227. [2] Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, bk. ii. ch. ix.

the brim? Is he happy, he with his countless friends, his easy home, the tools and toys of life both lying ready at his hand? Most certainly he is. His days sing as they go, and sparkle with a bright delight that makes the generous observer rejoice for him, and makes the jealous envy him.

But then you lose sight of him for a while, and years after you come on him again. The man is changed. All is so altered! Everything is sobered. Is he happy still? As you look into his face you cannot doubt his happiness a moment, but neither can you fail to see that this new happiness is something very different from that which sparkled there before. This is serene and steady, and as you look at it you see that its newness lies in this, that it is a happiness in principles and character, while the other was a happiness in circumstances. The man whom you used to know was happy because everything was right about him, because his self was thoroughly indulged, because the sun shone and he was strong. The man whom you know now is happy because there is goodness in the world, because God is governing it, because in his own character the discipline of God is going on. The first sort of happiness was self-indulgent; the new sort is built on and around self-sacrifice.

¶ You hear much of conversion nowadays: but people always seem to think they have got to be made wretched by conversion,—to be converted to long faces. No, friends, you have got to be converted to short ones; you have to repent into childhood, to repent into delight, and delightsomeness.[1]

¶ To "the typical Moody convert," during this mission, the Gospel came as tidings of great joy.

"I had seen occasional instances before of instant transition from religious anxiety to the clear and triumphant consciousness of restoration to God; but what struck me in the gallery of Bingley Hall was the fact that this instant transition took place with nearly every person with whom I talked. They had come up into the gallery anxious, restless, feeling after God in the darkness, and when, after a conversation of a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, they went away, their faces were filled with light, and they left me not only at peace with God but filled with joy. I have seen the sunrise from the top of Helvellyn and the top of the Righi, and there is something very glorious in it; but to see the light of heaven suddenly strike on man after man in

[1] Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive* (*Works*, xviii. 431).

the course of one evening is very much more thrilling. These people carried their new joy with them to their homes and their workshops. It could not be hid." [1]

¶ A short time before leaving for China it became my daily duty to dress the foot of a patient suffering from senile gangrene. The disease commenced as usual insidiously, and the patient had little idea that he was a doomed man and probably had not long to live. I was not the first to attend him, but when the case was transferred to me I naturally became very anxious about his soul. The family with whom he lived were Christians, and from them I learned that he was an avowed atheist and very antagonistic to anything religious. They had without asking his consent invited a Scripture reader to visit him, but in great passion he had ordered him from the room. The Vicar of the district had also called, hoping to help him, but he had spit in his face and refused to allow him to speak. His temper was described to me as very violent, and altogether the case seemed as hopeless as could well be imagined.

Upon first commencing to attend him I prayed much about it, but for two or three days said nothing of a religious nature. By special care in dressing his diseased limb I was able considerably to lessen his sufferings, and he soon began to manifest appreciation of my services. One day with a trembling heart I took advantage of his grateful acknowledgments to tell him what was the spring of my action, and to speak of his solemn position and need of God's mercy through Christ. It was evidently only a powerful effort of self-restraint that kept his lips closed. He turned over in bed with his back to me, and uttered no word.

I could not get the poor man out of my mind, and very often through each day I pleaded with God, by His Spirit, to save him ere He took him hence. After dressing the wound and relieving the pain, I never failed to say a few words to him which I hoped the Lord would bless. He always turned his back, looking annoyed, but never made any reply.

After continuing this for some time my heart sank. It seemed to me that I was not only doing no good but perhaps really hardening him and increasing his guilt. One day after dressing his limb and washing my hands, instead of returning to the bedside, I went to the door and stood hesitating a moment with the thought in my mind, "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." Looking at my patient I saw his surprise, as it was the first time since opening the subject that I had attempted to leave without saying a few words for my Master.

[1] *The Life of R. W. Dale of Birmingham*, 319.

I could bear it no longer. Bursting into tears, I crossed the room and said: "My friend, whether you will hear or whether you will forbear, I *must* deliver my soul," and went on to speak very earnestly, telling him how much I wished that he would let me pray with him. To my unspeakable joy he did not turn away, but replied:

"If it will be a relief to you, do."

I need scarcely say that falling upon my knees I poured out my soul to God on his behalf. Then and there, I believe, the Lord wrought a change in his soul. He was never afterwards unwilling to be spoken to and prayed with, and within a few days he definitely accepted Christ as his Saviour.

Oh the joy it was to me to see that dear man rejoicing in hope of the glory of God! He told me that for forty years he had never darkened the door of a church or chapel, and that then, forty years ago, he had only entered a place of worship to be married, and could not be persuaded to go inside when his wife was buried. Now, thank God, his sin-stained soul I had every reason to believe was washed, was sanctified, was "justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Often in my early work in China, when circumstances rendered me almost hopeless of success, I have thought of this man's conversion and have been encouraged to persevere in speaking the Word, whether men would hear or whether they would forbear.

The now happy sufferer lived for some time after this change, and was never tired of bearing testimony to the grace of God. Though his condition was most distressing, the alteration in his character and behaviour made the previously painful duty of attending him one of real pleasure. I have often thought since in connection with this case and the work of God generally of the words, "He that goeth forth *and weepeth* bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Perhaps if there were more of that intense distress for souls that leads to tears, we should more frequently see the results we desire. Sometimes it may be that while we are complaining of the hardness of the hearts of those we are seeking to benefit, the hardness of our own hearts and our own feeble apprehension of the solemn reality of eternal things may be the true cause of our want of success.[1]

(3) *Faith.*—There is a first faith and a second faith. The first faith is the easy, traditional belief of childhood, taken from other people, believed because it belongs to the time and land. The

[1] *Hudson Taylor in Early Years*, 178.

second faith is the personal conviction of the soul. It is the heart knowing, because God has spoken to it, the things of God, the after-faith that means communion. The first faith has a certain regulative force, but it has no real, life-giving power in it. The second faith is full of life. It, and it alone, is the belief which brings salvation.

¶ Bushnell's reconversion, if such it should be called, was a conversion to duty rather than to faith, but he made the discovery that faith could wait, but duty could not. Through this simple principle he found his way not only into a full faith, but into the conception of Christianity as a life—Christ Himself rather than beliefs about Christ, a distinction which, if not then seen in its fulness, is implied in all his writings.[1]

(4) *Knowledge.*—There is a shallow and a deep, an upper and a lower knowledge. The quick perception that catches the mere outside of things, and, recognizing the current condition of affairs, is able to throw itself in with them and so achieve a certain cheap success; and the calm, philosophic wisdom which looks down to the roots of things and sees their causes, and really helps to govern them—those are the two.

¶ Have you never heard a man talking flippantly to-day of the world's system, of the government of life, of the secrets of existence? and to-morrow some blow, some surprise has come right into the midst of his knowledge and killed it. Things have gone entirely different from what he expected, from what he prophesied. He has found how ignorant he is, and has been driven to the deeper understanding of a Will that works under everything, to that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom. Knowledge, ignorance, wisdom—here are the strata of life again; the first birth into one, death through the second, and a new birth into the third.[2]

¶ A young girl of twelve years decided to become a Christian. She was one of a large family of children. The new purpose went down into the vitals of her sensitive nature, and became the over-mastering passion. She had less opportunity of schooling than some of the others. But in strong, gripping life-purpose, in mental keenness, in deep, tender sympathy, and in the achievement of her life, she has so far outstripped all the others of the family, parents and children alike, that there seems to be no second.[3]

[1] T. T. Munger, *Horace Bushnell*, 27. [2] Phillips Brooks, *Seeking Life*, 198.
[3] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Home Ideals*, 248.

¶ A friend in America told me that in one of his after-meetings, a man came to him with a long list of questions written out for him to answer. He said: "If you can answer these questions satisfactorily, I have made up my mind to be a Christian." "Do you not think," said my friend, "that you had better come to Christ first? Then you can look into these questions." The man thought that perhaps he had better do so. After he had received Christ, he looked again at his list of questions; but then it seemed to him as if they had all been answered. Nicodemus came with his troubled mind, and Christ said to him, "Ye must be born again." He was treated altogether differently from what he expected; but I venture to say that was the most blessed night in all his life. To be "born again" is the greatest blessing that will ever come to us in this world.[1]

(5) *Love.*—We have now a new motive in life. Hitherto it has been only for ourselves that we have cared to live, and not even for our better selves, but just to gratify what our own fancies have dictated. And now this is changed. "Not your own" is our watchword; to show forth the praises of Him who hath called us "out of darkness into his marvellous light" is our aim, so that, as it were, a new spirit is infused into us, and a new object set before us. This is the direct consequence of our acceptance of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, for "he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

¶ Love is the infallible mark of possessing eternal life in Christ. "We know," says the Apostle John, "that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren"—the brethren of the Lord Jesus Christ; those that do the will of Jesus; we feel at home with them, and learn to love them, because they have the same Father, the same Elder Brother as ourselves.[2]

¶ He that is born of the Spirit loves his neighbour as himself; he knows nothing of the selfishness and uncharitableness and ill-nature of this world; he loves his neighbour's property as his own; he would not injure it, nor stand by and see it injured; he loves his neighbour's person as his own, and he would count no trouble ill bestowed if he could help or assist him; he loves his neighbour's character as his own, and you will not hear him

[1] D. L. Moody, *The Way to God*, 39.
[2] G. C. Grubb, *Unsearchable Riches*, 32.

speak a word against it, or allow it to be blackened by falsehoods if he can defend it; and then he loves his neighbour's soul as his own, and he will not suffer him to turn his back on God without endeavouring to stop him by saying, "Oh, do not so!"[1]

¶ I no longer stood aloof from men, and found pleasure in intellectual superiority; I was willing to "become a fool for Christ's sake" if by any means I might save some. I issued a card of invitation to the services of my church with this motto of St. Paul's upon it, which I now felt was mine. I had had for years feelings of resentment towards one who, I thought, had wronged me; those feelings were now dead. In another case I had been harsh and unforgiving under great provocation; but when I met after a long interval of time the one who had injured me, my heart had only love and pity for him. I sought out the drunkard and the harlot, and, when I found them, all repulsion perished in the flow of infinite compassion which I felt. I prayed with fallen women, sought them in their miserable abodes, fought with them for their own souls, and O exquisite moment!—I saw the soul awake in them, I saw in their tear-filled eyes the look that Jesus saw in the eyes of Magdalene. On my last Sabbath in London before leaving for America, one of these rescued girls, now as pure of look and manner as those most sweetly nurtured, called at my house to give my daughter a little present bought with the first money she had earned by honest toil in many years. On the day we sailed another said a special mass for us, and held the day sacred for prayer, in the convent where her bruised life had been nursed back to moral beauty. Love had triumphed in them, and I had brought them that love.[2]

(6) *Goodness.*—There is a first and second goodness. Man is born into a garden, as that story runs. Right impulses, perceptions that the good is better and more beautiful than the bad—these are not wanting in the early, the unregenerate life. And yet that life is unregenerate. It must be born again. Those good impulses, that mere sense of the beauty of goodness, that ignorance of vice, are not the true strength of the moral man, in which he can resist temptation and really grow to God. That fails. He dies out of that; and, once out of that, he never can go back to it again. The angels and the flaming sword are at the

[1] J. C. Ryle, *The Christian Race*, 51.
[2] W. J. Dawson, *The Empire of Love*, 115.

gate, to keep any man who has been innocent, and sinned, from ever returning to innocence again.

¶ There is a *natural* goodness; there is also a *relative* goodness. Some men are naturally good-tempered; it costs them nothing to be amiable; it would be difficult for them to be severe even in the judgment of wrong,—they would excuse it, or wink at it, or in some way escape the duty of branding it. And some are constitutionally more generous than others. They *like* to give; they like to lighten burdens, and to help the blind and the weak over difficult roads. This, indeed, is beautiful, charming, as are also other wild flowers often found in hedge-rows or in rocky places.[1]

¶ The very first mark of regeneration is straightness. Oh, for a revival of Divine righteousness in our business circles! oh, for a revival of Divine righteousness in our ecclesiastical dealings with money! oh, for a revival of Divine righteousness in our family lives! The first mark that God gives is not any inward ecstasy, is not any peculiarity of feeling, is not the singing of hymns, and saying Hallelujah; the first mark of regeneration is that you are straight inside and straight outside. He that doeth righteousness, hath been born of God.[2]

(7) *Progress.*—When we are born again it is not only to a position but a power, not only to give us a technical right to certain promises and possessions, but to enable us to enter upon them and to use them. There is, indeed, a new creation in us—a power that never existed before; and one which, though it may be very small at first, still does exist, and will go on growing and growing day by day, until it assumes a real and vigorous proportion which all our enemies "shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."

¶ Progress should mean that we are always changing the world to suit the vision. Progress does mean (just now) that we are always changing the vision. It should mean that we are slow but sure in bringing justice and mercy among men: it does mean that we are very swift in doubting the desirability of justice and mercy: a wild page from any Prussian sophist makes men doubt it. Progress should mean that we are always walking towards the New Jerusalem. It does mean that the New Jerusalem is always walking away from us. We are not altering the real to suit the ideal. We are altering the ideal: it is easier.[3]

[1] J. Parker. [2] G. C. Grubb, *Unsearchable Riches*, 29.
[3] G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, 193.

¶ The soul's whole life is in progress, in the eternal search, the quest of the Grail.

Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost in an endless sea—
Glory of virtue to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong,—
Nay but she aimed not at glory, no lover of glory she:
Give her the glory of going on and still to be.

The wages of sin is death; if the wages of virtue be dust
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove or to bask in a summer sky;
Give her the wages of going on and not to die.

This "going on" is the life of the soul. It is the essential thing in Christian character, which is not a possession of finished qualities, but a stern self-government under the will of God to the end of the widest service and an unending attainment.[1]

¶ One of the most interesting aspects of the life of St. Francis is, in fact, the continual development revealing itself in him. He is one of the small number to whom to live is to be active, and to be active is to make progress. There is hardly any one except St. Paul in whom is found to the same degree the devouring need of being always something more, always something better.[2]

Our course is onward, onward into light:
What though the darkness gathereth amain,
Yet to return or tarry, both are vain.
How tarry, when around us is thick night?
Whither return? what flower yet ever might,
In days of gloom and cold and stormy rain,
Enclose itself in its green bud again,
Hiding from wrath of tempest out of sight?
Courage—we travel through a darksome cave;
But still as nearer to the light we draw,
Fresh gales will reach us from the upper air,
And wholesome dews of heaven our foreheads lave,
The darkness lighten more, till full of awe
We stand in the open sunshine unaware.[3]

[1] R. E. Speer, *The Marks of a Man*, 160.
[2] Paul Sabatier, *St. Francis of Assisi*.
[3] R. C. Trench, *Poems*, 36.

The Amazing Gift of Love.

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THE AMAZING GIFT OF LOVE.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.—John iii. 16.

1. THIS is perhaps the favourite text in the Bible—one of the first texts which we learn as children, and one whose meaning becomes only the more precious to us as we grow older. For in these few simple words the whole Gospel is summed up. The depth of God's love, the greatness of His gift, and the blessings which He freely offers to us—all are made known to us every time that we repeat these words.

¶ I suppose it is a common fact of experience that those who live within sound of church bells after awhile do not notice their striking; might I suggest that something similar may be true of the great bell-note that is struck for us in the opening clause of this text? Which of us is sufficiently sensitive or responsive to its vibrations? Which of us realizes sufficiently that these words proclaim a final truth, the culmination of religious thought, something never to be transcended?[1]

2. It is no accident that has given to this statement its unique place in the mind and heart of Christendom. The deepest thinker sees in this verse a summing-up of the Gospel; the humblest believer feels that it expresses the whole substance of his faith. The inspired writer gathers himself up, as it were, to a supreme effort, and presents in one majestic, sweeping, comprehensive sentence the essence of Christian belief. And there stands the declaration still in all its simple grandeur, in all its boundless love, in all its mighty power. Centuries have passed over it, and left no impress. Time has failed to impair its freshness; it is the same to-day as it was yesterday. That which

[1] J. Warschauer.

it is to-day it will be for ever. For eighteen hundred years and more it has poured forth its blessings with unceasing flow upon the foolish and the wise, upon the sinner and the saint, upon the martyr and his murderer. Years have thrown no new light upon its meaning. The wisdom and learning of men, the meditations of the holiest and the best, have not added one jot to our comprehension of its mystery. Age upon age of opposition, of scorn, and of derision have as little succeeded in shaking its power. When we accept it in all its fulness, is it not still as much the source of joy as when it supported men, women, and children to a cruel death, gladly offering their lives in its defence? When we reject it, what can we offer in its place to support the weak or encourage the desperate? Is it not still the most sovereign balm to bind up the broken hearts of mourners; the surest stay of the dying? Is it not still the silver clarion, whose peal rises high and clear above the din of strife—stirring wearied soldiers of Christ to renew their struggle with evil, whether within their own hearts or in the world? Is it not still the rock upon which Christianity is founded? Is it not in reality the sum and substance of Christianity itself?

¶ For six nights Mr. Moorhouse had preached on this one text. The seventh night came and he went into the pulpit. Every eye was upon him. He said, "Beloved friends, I have been hunting all day for a new text, but I cannot find anything so good as the old one, so we will go back to John iii. 16"; and he preached the seventh sermon from those wonderful words: "God so loved the world." I remember the end of that sermon: "My friends," he said, "for a whole week I have been trying to tell you how much God loves you, but I cannot do it with this poor stammering tongue. If I could borrow Jacob's ladder, and climb up into Heaven, and ask Gabriel, who stands in the presence of the Almighty, to tell me how much love the Father has for the world, all he could say would be: 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.'"[1]

¶ At the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, Dr. Tasaku Harada, President of the Doshisha College, said: "As regards the aspects of the Christian Gospel and Christian life which appeal to the Japanese, in the first place I mention the love of God. Dr. Neesima used to say that he regarded the

[1] *Life of D. L. Moody*, 128.

16th verse of the third chapter of St. John's Gospel as the Fujiyama of the New Testament—'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.' If there are two words which have created the greatest transformation since the introduction of Christianity into Japan they are the words 'God' and 'love.'"[1]

Fuji, it should be said, is not only the sacred mountain of Japan but the ideal of excellence. Its almost perfect cone can be seen from most parts of the main island, and it forms the background of many Japanese landscapes, whether actually visible or not.

3. These words explain to us the relation in which Jesus stands as Son of man, first to God and next to us; and they interpret to our understanding, as well as to our faith and affection, the method by which the Eternal seeks us and finds us, saves us from ourselves and our sins, grants us the quickening sense of pardon, and fills us with the calm and strength of His everlasting life. Selecting the familiar incident from the Hebrew Scriptures in which the brazen serpent is lifted up before the dying people, Jesus says, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life": and then He adds the sublime statement, "*For* God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Now, this revelation is inexhaustible in its significance. It is a gospel within a gospel; and though uttered almost as swiftly as a morning salutation, yet it comprehends the contents of all the Gospels. It is as when, beginning our study of the universe, we start with a sea-beach, a stone-quarry, or a flower-garden, and then rise from it to the everlasting hills, thence to the infinite splendours of the midnight sky, and afterwards, through telescopes of ever-increasing power, look into the depths of the immeasurable heavens, adding world to world, and system to system, till we are overwhelmed with the marvel and grandeur of the realms of God; so, beginning with this primal declaration of the only begotten Son who dwelt in the bosom of the Father, and learning some of its contents, we are led on and on in our investigation, charmed by its simplicity, gladdened by its wealth, and awed by its mystery, till, mastered by our effort to comprehend the

[1] *World Missionary Conference, 1910*, iv. 305.

breadth and length, depth and height of the message, even St. Paul's language is too poor to express our wonder and our praise: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever."

¶ The "comfortable words," as they are called, in the Order of Holy Communion (Matt. xi. 28; John iii. 16; 1 Tim. i. 15; 1 John ii. 1, 2), form an element peculiar to the English rite, being found elsewhere only in those liturgies which derive their inheritance through the channel of the English Reformation. They appeared for the first time in the Prayer-Book of 1549, and their insertion was apparently suggested to our Reformers by the recent issue on the Continent of a manual, based on the work of Luther, Bucer, and Melanchthon, which contained numerous hints for reform in liturgical worship, and has left traces of its influence in other parts of the Book of Common Prayer. All will agree that the step here taken by our Revisers was a distinct enrichment of our Service, and that they have introduced a most beautiful characteristic of our present liturgy. You remember the place at which the words occur. The congregation is invited to kneel and join in a united confession of sin; and then, after the absolution has been pronounced, the four words of comfort are recited to the people, assuring them of the reality and meaning of that spiritual exercise in which they have been engaged. At such a moment each speaks with an eloquence which the heart of the faithful worshipper can readily understand. No comment is added, because none is required, and any paraphrase would be felt to jar upon the ear. The actual language of Holy Writ has been incorporated into the scheme of our liturgy, and the utterances of our Lord and His Apostles are left to make good by themselves the force of their appeal.[1]

4. Let us distribute the text into parts for easier apprehension, and in such a way as seems to us best "for the use of edifying." Dr. Warschauer proceeds in a direct line, taking the thoughts of the verse as they come—(1) God, (2) a loving God, (3) a great Giver, (4) the Gift of the Son, (5) Belief, (6) Eternal

[1] H. T. Knight, *The Cross, the Font, and the Altar*, 1.

Life. Dr. Eadie makes God's Love the subject, and begins with the world as the *Object* of God's love, takes next the *Gift* of God's love, and ends with the *Design* of God's love. Dr. Maclaren's divisions are: (1) The great Lake—"God so loved the world"; (2) the River—"that he gave his only begotten Son"; (3) the Pitcher—"that whosoever believeth on him"; (4) the Draught—"should have eternal life." If any criticism should be made of so effective and attractive a division of the text, it would be that it misses the prominence due to the *world.* For it has to be remembered that the revelation to Nicodemus was twofold—first, that he, a Pharisee, had to be born again before he could enter the Kingdom of God; and, next, that the way was open not only to Pharisees, but to sinners, including sinners of the Gentiles, that is to say, to the whole world. And it is this second part of the great revelation that St. John is now giving us. Accordingly the next verse proceeds, "For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him."

Let us, then, in order to keep the world-wide offer in our mind throughout, adopt this method of exposition—

I. God and the World—"God so loved the world."

II. Christ and the World—"that he gave his only begotten Son."

III. The World and Christ—"that whosoever believeth on him."

IV. The World and God—"should not perish but have eternal life."

I.

God and the World.

"God so loved the world."

The introductory "for" shows that this verse presents itself as the reason of a previous statement. The reference in it is to a remarkable incident in the history of ancient Israel. They had, in one of their periodical fits of national insanity, so provoked God that He sent among them "fiery flying serpents," and many of them were bitten and died. But to counteract the chastise-

ment, and make its terror a means of salutary impression, Moses was commanded to frame a brazen figure of one of the poisonous reptiles, and place it on the summit of a flagstaff, so that any wounded Hebrew might be able to see it from the extremity of the camp. And every one, no matter how sorely he felt the poison in his fevered veins, if he could only turn his languid vision to the sacred emblem, was instantly healed. It is then asserted that salvation is a process of equal simplicity, facility, and certainty—"even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him may have eternal life." But why are belief and salvation so connected; and how comes it that any one, every one, confiding in the Son of man, is rescued and blessed—saved from the death which he has merited, and elevated to a life which he had forfeited? This pledge of safety and glory to the believer has its origin in nothing else than the truth of the text: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."

i. God.

Jesus begins with God; God Himself, God in His totality; not with His "attributes" or "qualities," but with Himself in His redeeming activity. God is; is the first and last; and Jesus who knows Him, and knows Him as no other visitant of our earth does, starts in His description of redemption not from man, in his weltering wickedness and glaring rebellions, but from God in His eternally loving thought of us. It is permissible to take the opposite order, beginning with the lowest and ascending to the highest; but it is wiser in this, as in all else, to follow the Master, and look first, not at man, his sinning and its fateful consequences, but at God and His love of the world, and what it leads to. Salvation belongs to the Lord. The righteous Lord delights in mercy, and Jesus knows it and affirms it, as the supreme and all-controlling fact in our interpretation of God and of His world.

1. There is perhaps no text that speaks so directly to the Christian heart. There is none perhaps that finds a more immediate or more enthusiastic welcome in our breast; because we feel that in it we have the answer to all the devious problems

of intellect and the most pressing and urgent needs of our soul. For what after all is the great problem of all problems that come into the quiet of our own hearts? What is it that we most want to have assurance about? Surely in our deepest moments the thought that presses home most upon us is, What kind of a God is it we have to deal with? Is He a God who cares for us and loves us, or is He a God who moves so far away from us that we are, as it were, but the dust of the balance in His sight?

2. What, then, does the word "God" mean to us? There is probably no question that goes deeper to the root than this. We are not specially helped, certainly not in our religious life, when we have admitted that there must be a Supreme Power which has created and sustains the visible world. Granted that is so, such a Power has little to say to us. We might acknowledge its existence as we acknowledge the existence of some far-off fixed star, and with just as much or as little practical result, just as little effect upon our thought and life. Not that God is, but *what* God is, is what matters to us; nobody can be vitally interested in some far-off, great first cause, and we certainly are no better off—worse, if anything—when we hear or use such empty phrases as the totality of being, instead of speaking of our Father in heaven.

ii. God's Love.

1. A God who does not care, does not count; if He is not interested in us, how—to say it boldly—are we to be interested in Him? That is why, in practice, pantheism is hardly to be distinguished from atheism; you cannot worship a totality of being—you cannot pray to a nameless Power that is heedless of your welfare, not concerned in human joy or despair. No, the assurance which man's soul craves is that which bursts upon him in this declaration, "God so loved the world."

> For a loving worm within the clod
> Were better far than a loveless God.

He created the world, not in order to escape the boredom of eternity, but from love; He called souls into being, not for the purpose of conducting an endless series of aimless experiments, but in order that His love might have objects on which to bestow

itself; He leads them, not through a gnat-like span of existence to the gloom of annihilation, but to the home of everlasting love. That conception—and it alone—gives us anything worth calling a religion; and because Christianity insists upon and emphasizes this conception—God's love of the world and for the human soul—it is the absolute religion.

¶ If our endeavours, our struggles, our failures, our hopes, our aspirations, were nothing to the Eternal, what could the Eternal be to us? Here is a human document which came into my hands only a couple of days ago. The writer says: "The conception of God that I now have is not the personal one that I had under the old belief. . . . Instead of living under the daily notice of God's favour or resentment, I find that . . . we are but unnoticed units in all the vast millions of the universe. The result is that I am questioning the value of life." Can you wonder? I do not wonder at all! But if we feel that His eye is upon us, that our little lives mean something to His heart, that we matter to Him, and that His intention is for our good, then that very fact lifts our lives out of insignificance, makes the conflict worth waging, and enables the toiler, the sufferer, the witness for truth and right to say in the midst of seeming defeat and desolation, "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." God loves the world: all faith which stops short of that lacks the element which makes it faith indeed.[1]

2. "God loves." Where, outside of Christianity, does anybody dare to say that as a certainty? Men have hoped it; men have feared that it could not be; men have dimly dreamed and strongly doubted; men have had gods cruel, gods lustful, gods capricious, gods good-natured, gods indifferent or apathetic, but a *loving* God is the discovery of Christianity. Neither the gross deities of heathenism, nor the shadowy god of theism, nor the unknown somewhat which (perhaps) "makes for righteousness" of our modern agnostics, presents anything like this—"God loves."

¶ It seems to us a simple and purely elementary truth that God is holy love, but how could we have known anything about it without Christ and the revelation made by Him? Nature and history show us clearly the wise and mighty God, but where do they show Him as holy and loving?[2]

¶ God is here set forth as a lover; loving men, all men, every

[1] J. Warschauer.

[2] R. Rothe, *Still Hours*, 107.

man. "God so loved the world." Let us then at once make an addition to the first avowal of the Apostles' Creed, and say :—"I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and lover of the whole world." We sing, "Jesus, lover of my soul." We have equal right and warrant to sing, "God the Father Almighty, lover of my soul."[1]

iii. The World.

This designation of the object upon which the Divine love rested and rests eternally is to be interpreted according to the usage of this Gospel, and that usage distinctly gives to the expression "the world" not only the meaning of the total of humanity, but also the further meaning of humanity separated by its own evil from God. And so we get, not only the statement of the universality of the love of God, but also this great truth, that no sin or unworthiness, no unfaithfulness or rebellion, nothing which degrades humanity even to its lowest depths, and seems all but to extinguish the spark within it that is capable of being fanned into a flame, has the least power to deflect, turn back, or alter the love of God. That love falls upon "the world," the mass of men who have wrenched themselves away from Him, but cannot wrench Him away from themselves. They never can prevent His love from pouring itself over them; even as the bright waters of the ocean will break over some grim rock, black in the sunshine. Thus the outcasts, criminals, barbarians, degraded people that the world consents to regard as irrevocably bad and hopeless are all grasped in His love.

¶ The first meaning of the Greek word for world (*kosmos*) is "order." And as all order is more or less beautiful, the second meaning of the term is "ornament." The word is found with this meaning in 1 Peter iii. 3,—"Whose *adorning* let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the *ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." After the word had for ages been employed by the Greeks in these acceptations, it occurred to one of the greatest thinkers that ever lived that there was no order so wonderful as the order of the universe, no ornament so ornamental, so real, as the great world. Hence he employed the word which signified

[1] H. Johnson, *From Love to Praise*, 10.

"order" and "ornament" to designate the "world." The Holy Spirit, who guided the holy men who wrote the New Testament, approving of his idea, adopted the Greek term in its Pythagorean sense. And thus it is that we read such expressions as the following:—"The invisible things of God from the creation of *the (orderly and beautiful) world*, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." "Glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before *the world* was." "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain *the whole world*, and lose his own soul?"

To the eye of most of the ancients, however, the sun and the stars, instead of being orbs greater and more glorious than our earth, were only luminaries or lamps to light us by day and by night. The earth was to them almost all the universe. And it was the earth especially which they called *the world*. This import of the term became stereotyped; and thus we read in the Bible: "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to every creature."

But this world—the earth—is the temporary home of a vast multitude of thinking beings, every one of whom seems to be more wonderful and glorious than the vast earth on which he moves and has his being. These thinking beings use the earth; the earth does not use them. They think of the earth; the earth does not think of them. They feel too,—they feel the earth; the earth does not feel them. They live; the earth does not live. They are the lords of the earth, and subdue it and have dominion over it. They are men; and as they rise into the consciousness of what they are, they gradually reach the idea—"We are *the world*; the earth is beneath our feet." The men of the earth are a world upon a world. They are a thinking, feeling, will-endowed, moral world. They are "the world." Hence it is that we read of "*all the world* being guilty before God." God shall "judge *the world*." And in this Gospel according to Jesus, our Saviour is His own herald, and says that "God so loved *the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." The "world," then, which is loved by God, is the world of men.

It is, we may add, the world of all men. The word "world," when not expressly limited in its scope by the mention of the parties to whom it refers, or when not obviously limited by the nature of the case, must be understood in its simple, unrestricted, universal acceptation. It is not expressly limited here by the mention of any mere section of the race. The expression is not "the fashionable world," "the scientific world," "the religious

world," "the commercial world," "the literary world," "the busy world." Neither is there anything in the nature of the case referred to,—there is nothing in the nature of God's love,—that should lead us to suppose that it is confined either to the religious, or to the fashionable, or the scientific, or the commercial, or the busy, or the literary. It must be the whole world—the world of all men—that is referred to.

It is true that the word "world" is sometimes hyperbolically used with a limited reference. Even the expression, "the whole world," is sometimes thus used. We read that "the whole world lieth in wickedness"; although in that very passage we also read that they who believe in Christ are not lying in wickedness, but are "of God." Jesus said to His disciples, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Here the word "world" obviously means somewhat less than all men. It means "the worldly." It means those who are characterized by the spirit which actuated men in general all over the world.

But in the text it is not used with limitation. It is the world of all men, without distinction or exception, that is meant. It is the same world which is called "the whole world" in that other precious little gospel which runs thus:—"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of *the whole world*." The true extent of the import of the word may be seen in those other passages which assure us that there "is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom *for all*," and who tasted death *for every man*.[1]

1. But what about election? There is nothing in this text about it. God so loved the world—not a portion of the world—not the elect. The elect are only a part of the world and chosen out of it. But this love of God is world-wide, for everybody, without a hint of election in it. It sweeps away out beyond election, and has no boundaries, no limitations, no reservations.

¶ I believe in election. It is one of the great basal truths of Scripture, and a most blessed doctrine, charged with infinite stay and comfort for God's believing children. It puts the Father's everlasting arms about every child of His, and makes it certain he will never perish. But while it clearly and definitely includes

[1] J. Morison, *Holiness and Happiness*, 14.

somebody, it just as clearly and positively excludes nobody. It makes heaven sure for the chosen, but it keeps no one out of heaven. It is no chain gang bound about the necks of men, dragging some to salvation and some to perdition.[1]

2. This is the vital doctrine of election, the election of some for the benediction of the whole. "I pray for these, that the world may believe." The elect are called not to a sphere of exclusion, but to a function of transmission. They are elected not to privilege, but to service; not to the secret hoarding of blessing, but to its widespread distribution. The elect are not circles, but centres, heat centres for radiating gracious influence to remote circumferences, that under its warming and softening ministry "the world may believe" in the Son of God. That is the way of the Master. He will work upon the frozen streams and rivers of the world by raising the general temperature. He seeks to increase the fervour of those who are His own, and, through the pure and intense flame of their zeal, to create an atmosphere in which the hard frozen indifference of the world shall be melted into wonder, into tender inquisition, that on the cold altar of the heart may be kindled the fire of spiritual devotion. "I pray not for the world, but for these . . . that the world may believe." Through the disciple He seeks the vagrant; through the believer He seeks the unbeliever; through the Church He seeks the world; through the ministry of Christian men and women the world is to be won for Christ.

iv. God's Love of the World.

God loves the world, the world of men, Gentile as well as Jew, Cornelius not less than Nicodemus, Scythian as well as Syrian, bond not less than free. God in His totality loves man in his totality, loves his welfare, which is purity and peace, faith and love, self-poise and perseverance, devotion to high ideals, and enduring joy. "There is no difference." The Divine love is infinite as the Divine nature. It has no exclusions. Sin divides, degrades, excludes, but God is at war with sin. He loves the world. This is the glorious fact that sends its clear, pulsing light through all our human life. Oh, the joy, the unutterable joy

[1] H. Johnson, *From Love to Praise*, 17.

of it! God loves the prodigal who in his wayward folly has lost the track to the Father's house, the rebel who has defied His misjudged authority, the ingrate who has despised His goodness; and yet His love is such that it conquers their sin and ends their sinning, and brings them back to the Father's home penitent, obedient, and grateful.

1. How can it be that God loves such a world? A partial explanation lies in the fact that it is God's nature to love, that while others are by nature hard and unpitying, and even vengeful, God by nature is tender, sympathetic, and merciful. Yet it is the most tremendous statement that has ever confronted the human mind, the statement of God's gracious love for the world. It is the most difficult statement for the belief of man to grasp.

2. There are those who are eminently disgusted with God's world, who claim that we cannot have high moral perceptions and know humanity without feeling that humanity is despicable. There are those who would sweep the whole multitude of mankind into the sea and drown them; they have no patience with them and they have no hope for them. When, then, the theory is propounded that though God did indeed create this world and start humanity, He later cast off all thought of the world, having no further concern for humanity, the theory appeals to such persons, and they say that through such a theory they can understand the meaning of human life.

(1) But any such theory is apart from the supreme fact of revelation. That supreme fact teaches that, the very nature of God being love, His love insistently and persistently goes out to every one of His creatures. If it be asked how can it be possible that a holy God in His omniscience can thus love those who are wrong, incomplete, and unattractive, the answer is that in that omniscience lies largely our explanation of His love. The Eastern shepherd, because he knows each individual sheep of his flock, knows the needs of each individual sheep. Did not Longfellow say that it makes no difference who the man is, provided we know him, know his temptations and trials, we are sure to love him? Is it not also said that no man can hate another if he understands all his failures and distresses? The prejudice of man towards his fellow is based on man's ignorance of his fellow.

Nothing in all this earth so awakens interest in the individual as acquaintance with the individual. The person who is actually hideous as a perfect stranger, as an acquaintance is found to have a past history and a present experience that appeal to pity and even to love. A. C. Benson, in *Seen from a College Window*, says: "If the dullest person in the world would only put down sincerely what he or she thought about his or her life, about work and love, religion and emotion, it would be a fascinating document."

(2) Beyond God's omniscience lies His realization of the possible development of each one of all His world. He never is ashamed of humanity and He never allows that He has made a mistake in creating humanity. He believes that deep down in every human heart there are possibilities of development into beauty and even into power. Throughout history He has been laying His hand upon all sorts of people in sheepfolds or on farms, in obscure villages, in streets of both small and great cities, and He has summoned them to great riches of character, and to great usefulness of service. Where others look in hopelessness, He looks in profound expectation. To Him humanity has expressed itself in the spirit and conduct of Jesus Christ, and He anticipates that man after man from all sections and tribes of the earth will measure up to the likeness of Christ; and He rejoices with abundant joy when the Magdalenes are restored, the lepers are healed, the dumb sing, the blind see, and the dead live again. God is always anticipating glorious transformations of character.

3. Do we realize that, when we say "God loves the world," that really means, as far as each of us is concerned, God loves *me*? And just as the whole beams of the sun come pouring down into every eye of the crowd that is looking up to it, so the whole love of God pours down, not upon a multitude, an abstraction, a community, but upon every single soul that makes up that community. He loves us all because He loves each of us. We shall never get all the good of that thought until we translate it, and lay it upon our hearts. It is all very well to say, "Ah yes! God is love," and it is all very well to say He loves "the world." But what is a great deal better is to say, as St. Paul said, "Who loved *me* and gave himself for *me*."

¶ When we speak of loving a number of individuals—the broader the stream, the shallower it is, is it not? The most intense patriot in England does not love her one ten-thousandth part as well as he loves his own little girl. When we think or feel anything about a great multitude of people, it is like looking at a forest. We do not see the trees, we see the whole wood. But that is not how God loves the world. Suppose I said that I loved the people in India, I should not mean by that that I had any feeling about any individual soul of all those dusky millions, but only that I massed them all together, or made what people call a generalization of them. But that is not the way in which God loves. He loves all because He loves each. And when we say, "God so loved the world," we have to break up the mass into its atoms, and to think of each atom as being an object of His love. We all stand out in God's love just as we should do to one another's eyes if we were on the top of a mountain-ridge with a clear sunset sky behind us. Each little black dot of the long procession would be separately visible. And we all stand out like that, every man of us isolated, and getting as much of the love of God as if there were not another creature in the whole universe but God and ourselves.[1]

¶ After this he seems to have again paid a flying visit to Bathgate, the residence of his brother-in-law; for to this year belongs a beautiful anecdote told of him in that place. A young man belonging to the Church there was very ill, "dying of consumption." Mr. Martin had promised to take his distinguished relative to see this youth, and Irving's time was so limited, that the visit had to be paid about six in the morning, before he started on his further journey. When the two clergymen entered the sick chamber, Irving went up to the bedside, and looking in the face of the patient said softly, but earnestly, "George M——, God loves you; be assured of this—*God loves you.*" When the hurried visit was over, the young man's sister, coming in, found her patient in a tearful ecstasy not to be described. "What do you think? Mr. Irving says God loves me," cried the dying lad, overwhelmed with the confused pathetic joy of that great discovery. The sudden message had brought sunshine and light into the chamber of death.[2]

4. "God *so* loved the world." The pearl of this wonderful statement is the *measure* it supplies of that eternal love which redeems sinful man. "God *so* loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." It is the earthly way of describing the

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] Mrs. Oliphant, *The Life of Edward Irving*, ii. 87.

sacrifice God makes of God, of His true and real self for man. Language could not more clearly or strongly declare the fact that God gives Himself, His essential self, to the temptation and toil, the suffering and anguish, of our limited and burdened life, that He may carry out His world-loving purpose.

¶ The marvel of God's love for mankind grows as we learn the degree of that love. It is the degree of it that is apocalyptic. The Old Testament had attempted to disclose the graciousness of God, telling men that like as a father pities, so God pities. Exterior nature too had tried to make known God's healing and comforting power; abundant harvests telling of His affection, zephyrs breathing His soothing kindness, health-giving air and the recuperative tendencies within every normal body indicating that love is over mankind. But the degree of that love was never known to any man, however scholarly, until it was revealed when God out of desire to secure to man the highest possible good actually gave His Son for man.[1]

Winds weary with the old sea tune
Slide inland with some cloud, and soon
From woods that whisper summer noon
Weigh their wight wings with odour boon.
So I, long salted in our ocean drear
Of disbelief that Essence can be won
By any form of thought invented here,
Felt such a gush of joy about
My heart-roots, as if in and out
'Twas life-blood billowed; and as stout
As once we sent the battle-shout
Pitching clear notes against barbaric din,—
Oh, brother, my soul's voice against the rout
Of unbeliefs a man doth muse within,
Arising and protesting wild,
Spake, speaking out untruth defiled;
Spake, speaking in the truth exiled;
Spake, Little head and weary child,
Come home, God loves, God loves through sin and shame,—
Come home, God loves His world.[2]

[1] J. G. K. McClure, *Supreme Things*, 19. [2] Richard Watson Dixon.

II.

Christ and the World.

"He gave his only begotten Son."

The evidence of the love of God is the advent of God into the sinful and suffering life of man, bearing sin vicariously as His way of eradicating it from the heart and will of the sinner. "God," as St. Paul says, "was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus"—"the effulgence of the Father's glory and the very image of his person," uniquely and inexpressibly related to Him as "the only begotten Son"—He, and not a stranger, nor a seraph; He, and not one of the ordinary sons of men—"came into the world to save sinners"; to enter into contest with the awful power of sin; to make an end of it, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness.

Here, then, in the life of Jesus are the only unerring measures of the love of God. He spared not Himself from the suffering and agony and sacrifice necessary to save them, but in love of them bore it for them, to rescue them from the stupor and death of sin, and lift them to a share in His life. He who sees Jesus in Bethlehem as a babe, in Galilee as a working healer and wise teacher, in Gethsemane and on Calvary as the Just One dying for the unjust, sees the Father, and knows and understands a little of the way in which He mediates the redemption of a lost world.

1. Let us seek, first of all, to get rid of misconceptions in this vital matter.

(1) One of the most prevalent notions of God is this: that God is a hard, inexorable Being, who has been made mild and forgiving only by the death of Jesus Christ. This great Gospel text teaches just the contrary. It represents God as in love with men already before Christ came—with all men—with every man. "God so loved the world." And this is not any elect or select portion of the world, but the whole world of human beings that ever have lived, that live now or that ever will live on the face of the earth: not the world of the elect, but the world of sinners.

¶ How can you appease love? How can a loving God propitiate Himself? Read this text with this thought of a propitia-

tion of God injected into it, and see how it sounds. "God so loved the world that he gave his beloved Son to abate his own wrath and to placate himself!" Or, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that he might stop hating it." This is simply suicide by self-contradiction! What folly to talk of bribing to mercy One who is bent by every instinct and prompting of His heart to the exhibition of mercy! Will you bribe a mother to love her child?[1]

(2) But there is another false notion of God quite as prevalent in our day as the one just named, and probably quite as mischievous. It arises from the swing of the human heart to the opposite extreme of thought. God is conceived of as a Being whose love is so vast and sweeping as to make punishment at last impossible. Instead of being thought of now as a stern judge who will by no means clear the guilty, He is thought of as a Father too loving to punish, and so full of mercy that it will not be in His heart to deal with men according to any rigid standard of justice. But this notion is as false and unscriptural as the other, and to this notion as well as to the other the great Gospel text we have before us stands opposed. In the bosom of this heavenly message we not only find the beat of an infinite heart, but the imperial majesty of a holy will.

¶ There is no more warrant for the dear God of sentimentalism than for the hard malignant God of railing unbelief, and there is no warrant whatever for either. Let us carefully read the text again. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish." Whosoever believes. But suppose men do not believe and will not believe. Do you not see the inevitable, irresistible next step? If men still will not believe, then they still will perish. God's love does not save everybody, although it goes out to everybody. Some men will not take its great gift. And if the sacrifice is rejected, how can it help the sinner it is made for?

¶ God is all Love, and nothing but Love and Goodness can come from Him. He is as far from Anger in Himself, as from Pain and Darkness. But when the fallen Soul of Man had awakened in itself a wrathful, self-tormenting Fire, which could never be put out by itself, which could never be relieved by the natural Power of any Creature whatsoever, then the Son of God, by a Love greater than that which created the World, became

[1] H. Johnson, *From Love to Praise*, 5.

Man, and gave His own Blood and Life into the fallen Soul, that it might, through His Life in it, be raised, quickened, and born again into its first state of inward Peace and Delight, Glory and Perfection, never to be lost any more.[1]

2. "God so loved the world that he *gave*." This is always and everywhere the sign and token of love, this generous need to give itself forth. Love is prodigal—a reaching out, an overflowing beyond the borders and boundaries of self; an imperious desire to make some sacrifice, to do something for the sake of the beloved. Wherever you meet this passion of affection, you will meet that same splendid impetus of self-giving. The one great passion of a poet like W. E. Henley is a love of his country—not always wise but always genuine—and it bursts forth into those exultant lines—

What have I done for you,
England, my England?
What is there I would not do,
England, my own?

¶ The story is told by Luther that when his translation of the Bible was being printed in Germany, pieces of the printer's work were allowed to fall carelessly upon the floor of his shop. One day the printer's little daughter coming in picked up a piece of paper on which she found just the words, "God so loved the world that he gave"—the rest of the sentence not having yet been printed. It was a veritable revelation to her, for up to that time she had always been told that the Almighty was to be dreaded, and could be approached only through penance. The new light thrown upon God's nature by the scrap that had fallen into her hands seemed to flood her whole being with its radiance, so that her mother asked her the reason of her joyfulness. Putting her hand in her pocket, Luther tells us, the girl handed out the little crumpled piece of paper with the unfinished sentence. Her mother read it, and was perplexed: "He gave—what was it He gave?" For a moment the child was puzzled, but only for a moment; then, with a quick intuition, "I don't know; but if He loved us well enough to give us anything, we need not be afraid of Him." Truly there are things hidden from the wise and prudent that are revealed to babes. How impossible is Spinoza's demand that although God is not so much as interested in us, we ought to feel towards Him an overmastering love of the mind! And how

[1] William Law.

absolutely true, on the other hand, is the insight which declares, "We love him because he first loved us!"[1]

¶ In the next verse, where the same subject is dealt with, a different expression is employed. There we read, "God *sent* his Son." But here, where the matter in hand is the love of God, *sent* is far too cold a word, and *gave* is used as congruous with *loved*. It must needs be that the Divine love manifest itself even as the human does by an infinite delight in bestowing. The very property and life of love, as we know it even in its tainted and semi-selfish forms as it prevails amongst us, is to give, and the life of the Divine love is the same. He loves, and therefore He gives. His love is a longing to bestow Himself, and the proof and sign that He loves is that "He gave his only begotten Son."[2]

3. "He gave *his only begotten Son*." We cannot reach the bottom of this saying. The shallow sounding lines of men that are cast into that deep water do not touch the bottom, though some imagine that they do. What does it mean?—"His only begotten Son." There are some that would seek to minimize the force of that wonderful designation "only begotten." They tell us that it does not always signify soleness, or even uniqueness; and they point us to the fact that Isaac is called Abraham's only begotten son although Ishmael was equally his child. But such an argument is not good enough even to be called sophistical. It has no point and no relevancy. "Only begotten" must of necessity mean both uniqueness and soleness. Isaac *was* Abraham's only begotten son from the standpoint from which the term was applied. He was so with reference to the promise and the seed of Abraham. He was the promised only begotten son of the sacred line, and that of course is the meaning which no sophistry, no amount of quibbling, can ever get rid of. As applied to Christ it means a relation to God, which is not, and can not, be shared by any other man or by any other creature in the whole universe of God.

¶ The true test, as it seems to me, between a view of Christ's nature which can be regarded as a legitimate development of historical Christianity and one which can only be looked upon as a new and different creed, is this, "Does it admit the Divine Sonship of Christ in some unique, some

[1] J. Warschauer [2] A. Maclaren.

solitary sense, or does it make Christ merely one of many sons of God?"[1]

¶ It is hardly denied that Browning's whole being was penetrated with this idea of Christ as the supreme revealer, the one paramount representative of God to man. And yet we have been told by his biographer that, though he uses the language of Christian Theology, his declarations cannot of course be understood in the sense of orthodox Christianity. Why "of course"? If we tried to get to the bottom of the old phrases in which orthodox Christianity has become stereotyped, we should find perhaps sometimes that the burning words of a nineteenth-century poet are after all only the present-day equivalent of the thoughts and words of a St. John in the first century, and of an Athanasius in the fourth. If there be any truth in the way in which I have attempted to explain this tremendous phrase, "the only begotten Son of God," the thought which they contain is one of which Robert Browning's poetry is simply full.[2]

¶ Why have we only one Christ? We have had many philosophers, and neither to Socrates, nor Plato, nor Aristotle among the ancients; neither to Bacon, nor Descartes, nor Spinoza, nor Kant, nor Schelling, nor Hegel among the moderns, could the palm of solitary, indisputable superiority be given. We have had many poets, and neither to Homer, nor Dante, nor Shakespeare, nor Milton, nor Goethe could the praise of unique and unapproachable excellence be awarded. We have had many soldiers, and neither to Alexander, nor Hannibal, nor Cæsar, nor Charlemagne, nor to any of the mediæval and modern commanders could absolutely unequalled military genius be attributed. And so in every other department of human thought and action. No man is entirely unique. Every man has many compeers; Christ, and Christ alone, and that in the highest department, the religious, is unique, solitary, incomparable; and our question is, Why? Why has the Creator of men created only one Christ, while He has created myriads of all other kinds of men? That Creator is infinitely benevolent; He loves His creatures, He seeks their highest well-being. That well-being Christ has promoted not only more than any other man, but more than all other men that have ever lived. If one Christ has been so mighty for good, what would a multitude have accomplished? Yet God has given to our poor humanity only one, and if we persist in asking, Why? can we find a fitter answer than the answer that stands written in the history of the Word made flesh? God in giving *one* gave

[1] H. Rashdall, *Doctrine and Development*, 79. [2] *Ibid.* 81.

His *all*: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."[1]

¶ This has always been the Christian religion. There has never been any other Christian religion except this—never. St. Paul believed this. This was his religion. "God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law." "God sent forth his Son." How can you reconcile that with Jesus Christ being only a very good man? "Declared to be the Son of God with power." Does that sound like a very good man? "Through whom are all things." Is that the sort of thing you would say about a man? "Who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor." When was He ever rich as man? Never. From those four undisputed Epistles of St. Paul—the two to the Corinthians, Romans, and Galatians—it can be proved to demonstration that St. Paul believed that the Incarnation was the centre of the Christian religion. Take St. Peter and read what he says about "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls," to see what he believed. Take St. John. This is St. John: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." Take the old Christian liturgies—take a hymn like the *Gloria in Excelsis*, which has come down to us from the beginning, and you find the same thing: "Thou art the Everlasting Son." Take the Nicene Creed, which the early Church fought about with those who did not believe, and its final shape states that the Son was of the very substance with the Father, the same, identically the same substance with the Father.[2]

¶ One of the most notable events of my freshman's term was the death of the Rev. Charles Simeon. He was persuaded, though much advanced in years and diffident concerning his own physical strength, to accept the office of Select Preacher for the month of November. He had prepared his four sermons; but when November came, he was lying on a sick-bed; and when St. Mary's bell tolled for him, it announced, not his sermons, but his death. I heard those four sermons delivered by Mr. Simeon's successor in his own pulpit. So far as I can remember, the first three were introductory to the fourth, and the fourth gathered up the whole course and showed how type and shadow and prophecy and all the preparatory portion of God's dispensation found their fulfilment and explanation in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether my recollection of those particular sermons be correct or not, certain it is that the supreme position

[1] A. M. Fairbairn, *The City of God*, 251.

[2] Bishop Winnington Ingram, *The Love of the Trinity*, 117.

of Christ, as the Alpha and Omega of the revelation of God, as "the way, the truth, and the life," as the true link between earth and heaven, as the one sufficient sacrifice for sin, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," as the one foundation of human hope laid by the love of God Himself—certain it is, I say, that this supreme position of Christ was the point to which all Mr. Simeon's teaching turned, the basis upon which his ministry was built. What was the difference between that teaching and the teaching which it strove to supersede? It professed no new discovery, it did not consciously embody any doctrine which was not already embodied in the Book of Common Prayer. The difference would seem to be expressible by the phrase, the preaching of a living Christ. The teaching purported to reproduce the words of the text, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," and to reassert the words of St. Paul, "we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

A criticism of a similar kind may be made upon the teaching of a still more remarkable man, to some extent contemporary with Mr. Simeon; I mean John Wesley. What was the secret of the marvellous power of John Wesley's preaching? It owed much, I have no doubt, to his great natural endowments; much to his zeal and the strength of his convictions; but I believe that the ultimate analysis of the subject would show that, fundamentally, the secret of his power was his own clear hold upon, and his living exposition of, the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God. I say the *living exposition* because this is just what is necessary to infuse life into the souls of others. *Vivum ex vivo*, say the physiologists: *vivum ex vivo*, ought to echo the theologians; and a man who has a living apprehension of the love of God, as manifested to mankind in the mission of Him who is called "the only begotten Son," possesses in that apprehension a spiritual power, which it is more easy to regard with wonder than to measure or to restrain. The preaching of John Wesley can scarcely be reproduced; but the hymns composed by him and by his brother, who in this respect was even more remarkable than himself, will go far towards substantiating what I have now been saying.

Nor is it to be believed that the great movement of the Church of England which has taken place in the last half-century would have been the real and living thing which it has proved to be, if it had not rested upon Christ as the Incarnate Son of God. A

superficial criticism may identify this movement with questions of forms, of vestments, of architecture, of chanting the Church's offices; or, perhaps, with higher questions, such as the power of the Priesthood, the grace of the Sacraments, and other doctrines or practices, which, more or less, divide opinion. And, doubtless, it is true that as the movement described as the Evangelical was a reaction from the preceding condition of the Church, and contained a reassertion of doctrines which had been allowed to fall too much into abeyance, so the next great movement gained strength from the fact that in the fervour of the evangelical effort the symmetry of Catholic teaching had been to some extent lost sight of and injured. But allowing for all this, it may still be maintained that the real foundation of what is sometimes called the Catholic movement, equally with the Evangelical, was Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. Who can doubt this who has studied and loved Keble's "Christian Year"? Foolish things may have been said, foolish things may have been done; but these foolish things have not helped the movement; they have tended to mar and hinder it. The wisest and best teachers, whether they be called High Church or Low Church, Catholic or Evangelical, so far as their teaching is wise, earnest, and true, can adopt the words of him who hated divisions, and simply styled himself "the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ," when he wrote to one of the Churches, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

The same thing may be said if we go back to the greatest movement of all which can be found in our English Church history, namely, the Reformation of the sixteenth century. A variety of causes, as we all know, conspired at that time to bring about a great religious change; a variety of smaller causes conspired to determine the precise form which the change should assume in this country: general dissatisfaction with the then condition of things, long-standing jealousy of the Pope of Rome, the increase of learning, the translation of the Scriptures, the growth of the seed which John Wyclif had sown, combined with political and local causes to overthrow the Church as it then was. The traces of destruction are clear enough; but what were the forces of conservation and growth? Surely these were to be found in the fact that the wisest and best amongst the Reformers held fast to the doctrine of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Truly the Church needed a strong foundation in those terrible days; the storms raged and the winds beat upon the house; and it fell not, because it was founded upon a rock, and "that rock was Christ." In this supreme crisis of the Church's history she needed no new

doctrine, no new faith, no new machinery, but only a clearing away of all that tended to obscure the visage of her Lord and towards substituting the legends and inventions of man for the faith once delivered to the saints.

And if I wished for another illustration of the point which I am now pressing, I would seek it in a very different quarter, namely, in that wonderful book known by the title *De Imitatione Christi*. The title, as we know, is taken from one particular portion of the volume; but did you ever observe what an absolute misnomer it is as applied to the whole? To speak of imitating another implies that imitation is possible; a child imitates its father or its mother, or a man sees his neighbour do a charitable act and he follows his example, or the pupil imitates his tutor, hoping to become like him; and so when you read the history of Christ being kind and gentle, holy and devout and good; when you read of His being constant in prayer, or of His indignation against hypocrisy, and His compassion for the ignorant and fallen, or when you are told that when He was reviled He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not, and so forth throughout the whole human side of His history, you feel not only that you can try at least to follow His example, but that you ought and would like to do it; and if this were all, still more if Jesus Christ were such as Renan and others would represent Him to have been, you feel that there is at least nothing impossible in an imitation of Christ; but the Christ of Thomas à Kempis is very different from our modern pictures of Jesus of Nazareth; it is not only Christ the *man*, to be followed as an example, as all good men should be, but Christ the Son of God, who in the plenitude of His love and condescension holds converse with the human soul. And because this is so, the title of the book may be called a misnomer; but also because this is so, therefore the book has its marvellous and unequalled power of influence and magical fascination; it is the record of the possible communion of the soul with God through Christ, which is unspeakably precious, just because Christ is infinitely higher than humanity, and is worthy of worship, but incapable of imitation.[1]

4. Must we not say more and go further than this? Must we not say that in giving us Jesus Christ, God gave us Himself, just so far as we could receive this culminating gift? Is it not the fact that in Him we have the Way to God, the Truth about God, and the Life of God lived out among men? Is it not He who has made God real for us, by interpreting Godhead in terms of

[1] Bishop Harvey Goodwin, in *The Cambridge Review*, Nov. 24, 1886.

Fatherhood, so that henceforth we know God and have seen Him? He brings men to God as Teacher and Leader; but, even more wonderful, He brings God to men by visibly manifesting the Divine within Himself. In the face of so great a proof we can no longer doubt the love which prompted it. Men had thought of the Eternal as of some mighty Potentate, irresponsible in power, jealous of His own dignity, exacting obedience and praise and sacrifices; but in Christ they saw God willing to seek and to save, ready even, incredible though it might seem, to suffer and agonize for their sakes, loving men even in their disobedience and wilfulness, and giving Himself for them. "God so loved the world that he gave" Himself to us in His own dear Son.

¶ Men readily concede that God gave us Jesus, but they do not seem to see with equal clearness that God gave Himself in Jesus, and that He still continues to give Himself in everything worthy of Jesus that is making the world better, nobler, kinder. I remember reading during the South African war that the greatest deaths were those of the mothers who died in their sons, the greatest gifts were those of the mothers who gave their sons, the keenest anguish was that of the mothers who suffered in their sons for the sake of England. Here is a figure of the word of God for the world.[1]

(1) Here we come upon the doctrine of the Atonement, properly so called; that is, we are led to the recognition of the truth that the spiritual condition of the race of man has been changed, as the result of the Incarnation of the Son of God. Persons may of course easily misrepresent this doctrine, and say that it is derogatory to the character of the Almighty that He should require a human sacrifice to appease His wrath; that *God is love* and cannot be propitiated by the sufferings of the innocent; and that it is impossible for a man of honourable feeling to wish for a boon so obtained. But *who* preaches such doctrines as those which are thus reprobated? *who* does not maintain the doctrine of the text as the only ground of that of the Atonement, namely, that *God so loved the world*, that He even stooped *Himself* to save it?

¶ "What is the blood of Christ?" asked Livingstone of his own solitary soul in the last months of his African wanderings. "It is Himself. It is the inherent and everlasting mercy of God

[1] R. J. Campbell.

made apparent to human eyes and ears. The everlasting love was disclosed by our Lord's life and death. It showed that God forgives because He loves to forgive."[1]

(2) Not only is the gift of the only begotten Son the gift of God Himself, it is also the gift of God Himself *in sacrifice*. In giving Jesus to us God made a real sacrifice and really impoverished Himself to give it. If God had not truly loved us, or if He had loved us only in a measure, would He not have kept His Son in blessed fellowship, living in His love and finding in it His highest joy and the satisfaction of all His needs? But no; the love which God had was the love which stopped short at no sacrifice, and therefore He gave to us His only begotten Son.

¶ When we are asked, as we have been asked in *Robert Elsmere*, and in much literature that has preceded and followed it, why we do not get rid of the sternness and awfulness of religion and rest content simply with preaching the Fatherhood of God, our answer is plain. The one proof of God's love that will ever convince the world is the Cross of Christ. Said the great German, "If I were God, the sorrows of the world would break my heart." He knew not what he said. The sorrows of the world *did* break the Heart of hearts. Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, even unto blood, even unto broken-heartedness. Why do you not say that God is Father and that all is to be well, and leave Christ out? Why do you not read the text, "God so loved the world, that he gave to every one everlasting life"? If any one proclaims that God is love, upon what facts is he to rest his arguments? Does he find the love of God in the mass of misery and vice in which the world around is weltering? Belief in the love of God has been maintained and propagated in the shadow of the Cross, and only there. Apart from that, where is the proof that God is a Father and not merely a force? In the Old Testament they did not know it, though there are passages that dimly shadow it. Christ came in time. The heart of the world was failing. Martyr after martyr, prophet after prophet had died without a token. He came to change the Cross into a throne, and the shroud into a robe, and death into a sleep, and defeat into everlasting triumph.[2]

[1] J. Clifford, *The Secret of Jesus*, 101.

[2] W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, 251.

¶ I preach to-day the sacrifice of God.

> Ride on, ride on, in majesty,
> In lowly pomp ride on to die,
> Bow Thy meek head in mortal pain,
> Then take, O God, Thy power and reign.

That is the old theology, that is the faith which has converted the world, that is the faith of the martyrs, that is the faith of the writers of the New Testament, that is the faith of the missionaries who brought Christianity to what was then barbarous Britain, and I for one say, "Thank God, that is my faith to-day."[1]

¶ If God had done nothing, and I was asked to go and see a sister dying of cancer before my eyes, or to spend the night in the Cancer Hospital—I was once up all night there with a man dying with cancer, until five o'clock in the morning—do you suppose I could easily love God? I could not, because I could not feel that He had done anything or suffered anything. When some man says to me, "Come, let us fight this difficult battle together; I will bear the worst with you; I will go and suffer with you, fight with you, bear the unpopularity with you, and all that is brought against you; I will fight side by side with you"—I honour that man, and I would go and follow him, stand by him, and I should feel that he had done something to show his sympathy. And when God, as I believe, comes down among all the cancer and the consumption and the misery, and says, "I will come and bear it with you; I cannot explain to you now why it has to be borne, but I will bear the worst with you; I suffered more than I ask you to suffer," I can understand that; and when I am dying, or when I am with some one dying, it is everything to know that God knows of the suffering and death, and has borne it Himself. And, therefore, I say without the Incarnation I could not answer one of these questions that are put to me about the pain and misery and sickness we have in the world.[2]

(3) By looking thus upon the sacrifice of our blessed Lord, and the great law of vicarious suffering of which that was the highest manifestation, we gain a new sense of the love of God thus suffering for us; and it is thus that, if we would rise with Christ and share His Kingdom, we must also suffer and die with Him. At some time or other we all pray that we may sit down

[1] Bishop Winnington Ingram, *The Call of the Father*, 199.
[2] Bishop Winnington Ingram, *The Love of the Trinity*, 113.

with Him when He comes into the inheritance of His glory, but to all of us He returns the same answer: "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" And no doubt we can, if we are filled with His love and have learned to lean upon His Cross; but suffering will have no beauty in it unless it be sanctified by love, as indeed it has no virtue in it unless we bear it for a good end and from the constraining force of love. And thus we arrive at the true idea of our own life, which is that we should aim, not at freedom from suffering, but at elevation of character and a spirit of unselfish devotion.

¶ Norman Macleod in his *Highland Parish* tells a wonderful story of love's redemptive sacrifice. Years ago a Highland widow, unable to pay her rent, was threatened with eviction. She set out, with her only child, to walk ten miles over the mountains to the home of a relative. When she started the weather was warm and bright, for the month was May, but before she reached the home of her friend a terrible snowstorm fell upon the hills. She did not reach her destination, and next day a dozen strong men started to search for her. At the summit of the pass where the storm had been the fiercest they found her in the snow, stripped almost to nakedness, dead. In a sheltering nook they found the child, safe and well, wrapped in the garments the mother had taken from her own body. Years afterwards the son of the minister who had conducted the mother's funeral went to Glasgow to preach a preparatory sermon. The night was stormy and the audience small. The snow and the storm recalled to his mind the story he had often heard his father tell, and, abandoning his prepared sermon, he told the story of a mother's love. Some days after he was hastily summoned to the bed of a dying man. The man was a stranger to him, but seizing the minister's hand he said, "You do not know me, but I know you, and knew your father before you. Although I have lived in Glasgow many years, I have never attended a church. The other day I happened to pass your door as the snow came down. I heard the singing and slipped into a back seat. There I heard the story of the widow and her son." The man's voice choked and he cried, "I am that son. Never did I forget my mother's love, but I never saw the love of God in giving Himself for me until now. It was God made you tell that story. My mother did not die in vain. Her prayer is answered."[1]

[1] *The Expository Times*, xx. 301.

III.

The World and Christ.

"Whosoever believeth on him."

The purpose of God in the gift to the world of His only begotten Son is that whosoever believeth on Him may not perish but have eternal life. For He wills that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, one Mediator also between God and man, Himself God, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all. Personal trust in Jesus as the infallible Revealer of what God thinks and feels about us, and what He will do for the worst of us at our worst, kills the despair and self-torture born of sin, whilst it makes sin appear exceedingly sinful, lifts us into fellowship with the Divine, with right and purity and goodness and service, and compels us to feel that the God who suffers so inconceivably and mysteriously for us as He did will surely supply all our needs and make us sharers of His joy for ever. It is a new and renewing thought of God. The faith on Christ is love, the love is faith. Each works by the other, and both work on and towards righteousness, for Christ and righteousness are one; and to trust and love Him is to trust eternal right and love it and work for it; and so the Gospel is the *power* of God unto salvation to every one that believeth on Jesus. The secret of Jesus is laid bare.

¶ The other day, when I was in Northumberland, some one asked me in public, with evident sincerity, if it did not make a difference whether he accepted Christ or not; and when we had arrived at a mutual agreement as to what we meant by "accepting Christ," we agreed about the question itself, namely, that it made all the difference whether a man accepted or rejected Him. To accept Him means to believe that truth and right are worth witnessing and, if need be, suffering for, in daily life, in the home, and the shop, and the office, and the factory; that to give is more blessed than to receive; it means a firm belief in the victory of goodness, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding; it means the acknowledgment of the kingship of love. How far are we one and all from that consummation! Yet not so far but that we desire it, and in our best moments strive after it.[1]

[1] J. Warschauer.

1. St. John has in mind something more than merely intellectual assent.

(1) Believing does not, for example, mean here holding all that is taught in the Bible about Creation, about Adam and Eve, or about the Fall. Nor does believing here mean accepting all that is said about Christ in the Bible. A man might believe everything in the Bible and yet not believe on Christ in St. John's sense at all; while, on the other hand, he might believe on Christ in St. John's sense, and yet not believe other things in the Bible.

(2) Again, believing does not mean here the kind of belief implied in the acceptance or the recitation of a Creed. Many solemnly and sincerely recite a Creed, and bow at the Name of Jesus, who yet never believed on Jesus in St. John's sense; while, on the other hand, a man may believe on Jesus, in St. John's sense, and have Eternal Life, and yet conscientiously hesitate to recite a Creed, feeling that he could not honestly accept some of the points that are mentioned in it.

(3) Believing does not mean here simply holding a certain doctrine or theory of the Atonement. There have always been multitudes of people who have held the correct, orthodox view of the Atonement—or the view which in their time was generally held to be orthodox—have held it absolutely and passionately, and yet, in St. John's sense, have never believed on Jesus, and never had Eternal Life; while there have been people who believed on Him in St. John's sense, and had Eternal Life, but who never attempted to formulate any theory of the Sacrifice which was offered by Jesus once for all.

2. St. John includes an undoubtedly intellectual element, when he speaks of "belief," as even this passage shows. His whole object in writing is to prove from the reminiscences of the life of the Lord that Jesus was the Word made flesh, that He was the only begotten Son of God, and that, though Son of Man, He was Divine. There is that intellectual element in St. John's idea of believing. But the distinctive meaning of "believe" in St. John's writings is not that intellectual element. That intellectual element underlies his thought, but it is not *that* which he is urging. In order to see what he means by using the word "belief," we should look at what results from the believing.

According to him, "belief" gives life. But what gives life is nothing but vital fellowship with God, and therefore by "believing" he means something which produces a vital fellowship with God. What is it that produces vital fellowship with God?

(1) It is the act of personal trust in Jesus as a living Person, in Jesus as the personal Manifestation of God the Father to the soul of Man. It is not believing this or that about Him—the intellectual side of Faith; it is casting ourselves upon Him, the Unseen, as a Reality, as *the* Reality, as the Reality of God.

¶ Never shall I forget how in my early years I was distressed as to the meaning of the word "believe" as used in Scripture. It seemed to me to have a mysterious significance, associated with experiences that no ordinary youth could possibly have. I felt that if I myself should ever believe on Jesus Christ it must be through some strange inworking whereby I should be lifted into special ecstasies, and given special visions. But one day I came upon the statement that the word "believe" is made up of two old words "by" and "live," that to believe on a person is to "by-live" or "live-by" that person, that if I believe in Washington I live by the spirit that animated Washington, and that if I believe in Jesus Christ I live by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Whether or not this statement concerning the origin of the word stands the test of linguistic criticism is of minor significance; the fact remains, and ever will remain, whatever linguistic criticism may say, that any man who lives by another believes in that other. And when I realized this fact and I simply started out to do what I thought Jesus Christ would have me do in my place and in my time, I am sure that I began to answer to God's desire, and that then in those earliest moments, whether I lived or whether I died, I was in God's sight a believer.[1]

(2) To trust Christ is not merely to believe with the intellect the truth about Him, but to commit our hearts to His keeping. What all that is going to mean we cannot know at first, but there is in the life of every Christian one moment, which may or may not be remembered, when the turn is taken. In the life of every one who has really tried to make a high use of the years, there is always a point where the road ceases to descend and begins to climb upward. What has happened? Perhaps some fervent and

[1] J. G. K. McClure, *Supreme Things*, 23.

rousing word has been carried home by the Holy Spirit. There has been a bereavement—perhaps some one has died who is so cruelly missed that the rest of life seems dark and cold as the later hours of a winter day. There has been a disappointment, perhaps, in something on which the heart has been fixed, and for consolation it has turned to the Refuge and the Lover of souls. To one who sat dreaming in her garden, repeating the old enigmas, "Was He? Was He not? If He was not, from whence came I? If He is, what am I, and what am I doing with my life?" a voice seemed to speak. The voice spoke and said, "Act as if I were, and thou shalt know I Am!" She obeyed, and soon He revealed Himself. In this way and that is the story told, is the experience passed through; but in essence it is always the same. It is a committal for time and for eternity, for life and for death, to the Lord of all worlds. Then is the channel opened between the poor, narrow, needy life and the great lake of love. Then the Divine Lover has His way with the soul.

¶ You believe God; that is good. You believe the Gospel; that is good too. Believe all that; but that is not the point. It is not believing the Bible, it is not even believing God, it is not believing the Gospel that gives the Everlasting Life that is spoken of. It is the definite act of self-committal to Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life, as the Manifestation of the saving Power and Love of God to *you*. It is that definite committal of yourself—an act of the soul—a going out, a reaching forth, a casting of yourself on Him. It is that act of faith, that believing in Him, that gives the fellowship with God which is Eternal Life.[1]

¶ I sometimes wish we had never heard that word "faith." For as soon as we begin to talk about "faith," people begin to think that we are away up in some theological region far above everyday life. Suppose we try to bring it down a little nearer to our businesses and bosoms, and instead of using a word that is kept sacred for employment in religious matters, and saying "faith," we say "trust." That is what you give to your wives and husbands, is it not? And that is exactly what you have to give to Jesus Christ, simply to lay hold of Him as a man lays hold of the heart that loves him, and leans his whole weight upon it. Lean hard on Him, hang on Him, or, to take the other metaphor that is one of the Old Testament words for trust, "flee for refuge" to Him. Fancy a man with the avenger of blood at his back, and the point

[1] R. F. Horton, *The Triumph of the Cross*, 14.

of the pursuer's spear almost pricking his spine—don't you think he would make for the City of Refuge with some speed? That is what you have to do. He that believeth, and by trust lays hold of the Hand that holds him up, will never fall; and he that does not lay hold of that Hand will never stand, to say nothing of rising. And so by these two links God's love of the world is connected with the salvation of the world.[1]

3. "Whosoever."—Take together the two words "world" and "whosoever." It need not be said that those are both *universal terms.* "World" is the most universal term that we have in the language. For instance, we sometimes mean by it the whole earth on which we dwell; sometimes the whole human family that dwells on the earth; and sometimes the world-age, or whole period during which the whole family of man occupies the sphere. That is the word that God uses to indicate the objects of His love. But there is always danger of our losing sight of ourselves in a multitude of people. In the great mass individuals are lost, and it becomes to us simply a countless throng. But when God looks at us, He never forgets each individual. Every one of us stands out just as plainly before the Lord as though we were the only man, woman, or child on earth. So God adds here another word, "whosoever," which is also universal, but with this difference between the two: "world" is collectively universal, that is, it takes all men in the mass; "whosoever" is distributively universal, that is, it takes every one out of the mass, and holds him up separately before the Lord. If this precious text only said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," one might say, "Oh, he never thought of me. He had a kind of general love to the whole world, but he never thought of me." But when God uses that all-embracing word "whosoever," that must mean me; for whatever my name may be, it is "whosoever."

¶ "Thank God," said Richard Baxter, "for that 'whosoever.' Had it been—'Let Richard Baxter take,' I might have doubted if I were meant; but that 'whosoever will' includes me, though the worst of all Richard Baxters."

¶ In the South Seas, in the beginning of last century, was a man of the name of Hunt, who had gone to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants of Tahiti. The missionaries had laboured there for about fourteen or fifteen years, but had not, as yet, a single

[1] A. Maclaren.

convert. Desolating wars were then spreading across the island of Tahiti and the neighbouring islands. The most awful idolatry, sensuality, ignorance, and brutality, with everything else that was horrible, prevailed; and the Word of God seemed to have made no impression upon those awfully degraded islanders. A translation of the Gospel according to St. John had just been completed, and Mr. Hunt, before it was printed, read, from the manuscript translation, the third chapter; and, as he read on, he reached this sixteenth verse, and, in the Tahitian language, gave those poor idolaters this compact little gospel: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." A chief stepped out from the rest (Pomare II.), and said, "Would you read that again, Mr. Hunt?" Mr. Hunt read it again. "Would you read that once more?" and he read it once more. "Ah!" said the man, "that may be true of you white folks, but it is not true of us down here in these islands. The gods have no such love as that for us." Mr. Hunt stopped in his reading, and he took that one word "whosoever," and by it showed that poor chief that God's gospel message meant *him*; that it could not mean one man or woman any more than another. Mr. Hunt was expounding this wonderful truth, when Pomare II. said, "Well, then, if that is the case, your book shall be my book, and your God shall be my God, and your people shall be my people, and your heaven shall be my home. We, down on the island of Tahiti, never heard of any God that loved us and loved everybody in that way." And that first convert is now the leader of a host, numbering nearly a million, in the South Seas.[1]

¶ Bengel, the accomplished expositor of Scripture, says, "The ground I feel under me is this: that by the power of the Holy Ghost I confide in Jesus as an everlasting High Priest, in whom I have all and abound." Archbishop Whately said, "Talk to me no more of intellect; there is nothing for me now but Christ." Bunsen said, "I see Christ, and I see, through Christ, God." That brilliant preacher, Dr. McCall, of Manchester, said, "I am no fanatic; rather I have been too much of a speculatist; and I wish to say this—which I hope you will all forgive me for uttering in your presence—I am a great sinner, I have been a great sinner; but my trust is in Jesus Christ and what He has done and suffered for sinners. Upon this, as the foundation of my hope, I can confidently rely now that I am sinking into eternity."[2]

[1] A. T. Pierson.

[2] J. Clifford, *The Secret of Jesus*, 96.

IV.

The World and God.

"Should not perish, but have eternal life."

1. *Perishing.*—Pardon is not wrung from the Father by the Son. It is from the Father's love that salvation flows. But this love of God to our sinful world does not form a contradiction to that wrath which suspends judgment over it. It is not in reality the love of communion with which God embraces the pardoned sinner; it is a love of compassion like that which is felt for the unhappy or for enemies, a love the intensity of which arises from the very greatness of the punishment which awaits the obdurate sinner. Thus the two ideas which form the beginning and end of the verse—Divine love and threatening perdition—are closely joined together.

(1) Perishing in its more obvious and terrible forms we have all seen. We have seen bright young lives clouded, overdarkened, devastated, destroyed. But there is such a thing as perishing respectably, and that is far more common. A man may succeed in life, and attain his low ambitions, and pass well among his fellow-townsmen, and yet when you contemplate him you know that he has perished, that his ideals are gone, that there is now no longer any communication between him and his Maker, that his soul is gone out of him. There are more who perish in silk and broadcloth than there are who perish in rags.

¶ There is a danger, which only the mission of Jesus Christ averts, that men may perish. That is a danger which is as universal as the love of God, for it is "the world" that is in danger of perishing; and it is a danger which is as individualizing and specific as the love itself, for "the world" that "perishes" is made up of single souls. In that category you have a place, and I, and all our brethren. Whoever stands in the great class of the objects of Divine love belongs also to the class of those who are in risk of destruction. It does not become me to fling about the thunderbolts of God, or to threaten and lighten as He has the right to do; but I do believe that much of the preaching of this generation is toothless, impotent, unblessed, because men have got too falsely tender-hearted and sentimental to talk about the necessary issue of alienation from God. Be you

sure of this, that in whatever form it may be realized—and that is of secondary importance—the world—and especially you that have heard the Gospel all your days—stands in peril of destruction. "To perish," whether it mean to be reduced into non-being, or whether it mean, as I believe it means, to be so separated from the one Source of life that, conscious existence continuing, everything that made life beautiful and blessed and desirable is gone—to "perish" is the necessary end of the man who wrenches himself away from God.[1]

(2) There is a terrible significance in that short negative clause "should not perish but"—most terrible. For, regarded in the light of the rest of the text, to *perish*—what is to perish? It is to fall beyond the outermost sphere of God's love, as to be *saved* is to be drawn into its innermost circle. To perish is to feel that the sweet attraction of all that is good, all that is lovely, has lost its hold on the soul, to feel that another horrible attraction working in a contrary direction is bearing the spirit away into the abyss of malignant sin and of eternal death. The fearful anti-climax of eternal life! The two are mutual alternatives: the absence of the one is the presence of the other. There is a strange antagonistic correspondence between the two. The punishment of the lost is not merely in proportion to sin, but seems to be in some proportion to the parallel eternity of the glory offered but refused. It is the punishment of beings to whom eternal life has been tendered but rejected, of beings who have had an option and taken their choice. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light."

¶ One day in America, near the Falls of Niagara, Moore saw this scene:—An Indian whose boat was moored to the shore was making love to the wife of another Indian; the husband came upon them unawares; he jumped into the boat, when the other cut the cord, and in an instant it was carried into the middle of the stream, and before he could seize his paddle was already within the rapids. He exerted all his force to extricate himself from the peril, but finding that his efforts were vain, and his canoe was drawn with increasing rapidity towards the Falls, he threw away his paddle, drank off at a draught the contents of a bottle of brandy, tossed the empty bottle into the air, then quietly

[1] A. Maclaren, *Paul's Prayers*, 187.

folded his arms, extended himself in the boat, and awaited with perfect calmness his inevitable fate. In a few moments he was whirled down the Falls and disappeared for ever.[1]

The scene is terrible enough. But the perishing of a man's body is a light thing in comparison with the perishing of his soul.

(3) The light and the darkness, the Light of Light and the blackness of darkness, salvation and perdition—between these two extremes the inhabitants of this earth occupy the middle place. We move on the neutral ground, between the armies of Heaven and the legions of Satan, in the debatable territory—this world is the region of our option and the scene of our free decision. Out of Christ there is no salvation to any man: neither in this world nor in the world to come. "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," but the great name of Jesus. Faith in Him is, as He Himself is, the gift of God, but it is the gift of the Spirit inviting, persuading our will, not compelling it. To refuse these gifts is to perish; to reject them now is to be rejected at the last day. To lose them here is to learn their value by contrast hereafter and to weep their loss for ever.

¶ In the Royal Academy of 1908 there was a picture by the Hon. John Collier which will always attract attention. It is called "Sentenced to Death." We are introduced into the consulting room of a great physician, and facing us is a young man who is hearing from the doctor the result of his diagnosis. The doctor is telling him that he is a doomed man, that he will presently die. The young man sits there in the chair, faultlessly dressed, handsome, with all the promise of youth in his face, and there is no special look of illness except perhaps to a doctor's eye. He has just received his sentence of death, and has strung himself to endurance.

I thought I saw in the intention of the artist the dawning of a vision in the young man's eyes, as if he were seeking for an inward hope, or trying to fix his thought upon a faith that he half knew. As I looked into his face how I longed, though it was only a picture, how I longed to tell him that if he believed in Jesus he had everlasting life, that he need not be afraid, he need not even be cast down. Believing in Jesus he *has* everlasting life. As I looked at the picture I so longed to tell him, that I turned my face away lest I should cry out in the room.[2]

[1] *The Greville Memoirs*, i. 254. [2] R. F. Horton.

2. *Eternal Life.*—Eternal life comes, and can come, only by a vital fellowship with the Ever-living God; and the reason why this believing in Jesus brings eternal life is that it *brings* us into vital fellowship with God. Through Christ, through faith in Christ and the committal of the soul to Him, we find we have come into vital contact with God. We have touched the source of Life—Eternal Life.

(1) It is called eternal life, which does not mean that it is a life in a future world; but it is called eternal life here and now, because here and now this life which means vital fellowship with God is established, and begins to run on into Eternity. A life begins here and now which continues there and then—beyond and for ever. Believing in Christ means that we have come into contact with the very Fountain of Life—God Himself, the Eternal and Ever-living God; and therefore, believing, you *have* eternal life. When we believe in Christ, eternal life has begun in us.

¶ God does not help His children now and then, but now, always now. There is no "then"; it exists only in imagination. The only time we ever actually need God is now. If "then" troubles us in imagination and we wonder what will become of us then, let us learn to live with God now. Form the habit of using God and being used of God, and the imaginary and dreadful "then" will be swallowed up in the stream of now when the time comes. No clocks keep time to-morrow. Springs push and hands point now. Now is the appointed time for clocks as well as people. God never helped anyone to-morrow. He is a very present help. What is eternity but God's now? Let us then live the eternal life with God now.[1]

(2) The end God has in view in such belief is our largest opportunity. He calls it eternal life. It is fulness of everything that makes man great and existence sweet. It is not mere immortality. Immortality simply gives the ennobled spirit its endless perfect province. Eternal life is realized when a man comes to his better self; when he is saved from being "frittered away in frivolities, from being consumed by the canker of avarice, from being palsied by the mildew of idleness, from being enervated by luxury, from being crippled by the paralysis of doubt." Eternal life is rescue from perishing in selfishness, animalism, hate

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 44.

and pride, with all the other evils that destroy humanity. Eternal life is when a man, entering upon the path of truth and nobility, renders service to humanity, his body being obedient to every known law of health, his mind entering into fellowship with the highest thoughts of eternity, and his spirit communing with the spirits of the just and good on earth and of the just and good in heaven: when a man in his own time and place according to his own temperament reproduces in himself Jesus Christ.

¶ We shall behold with our inward eyes the mirror of the wisdom of God, in which shall shine and be illumined all things which have ever existed and which can rejoice our hearts. And we shall hear with our outward ears the melody and the sweet songs of saints and angels, who shall praise God throughout eternity. And with our inner ears we shall hear the inborn Word of the Father; and in this Word we shall receive all knowledge and all truth. And the sublime fragrance of the Holy Spirit shall pass before us, sweeter than all balms and precious herbs that ever were; and this fragrance shall draw us out of ourselves, towards the eternal love of God, and we shall taste His everlasting goodness, sweeter than all honey, and it shall feed us, and enter into our soul and our body; and we shall be ever an hungered and athirst for it, and because of our hunger and thirst, these delights and this nourishment shall remain with us for ever, evermore renewed; and this is eternal life.[1]

3. What response are we making, or are we prepared to make, to the love of God? There was a book written not many years ago of which the title was: *The Christian Life: A Response.* It was a beautiful title, which put the Christian life in the true attitude—it should not be lived out of fear of hell, not lived to purchase heaven, but rather as a response to the love of God. What sort of response are we expected to make to the love of God?

(1) *Gratitude.*—Perhaps you are familiar with the story of the brilliant unbeliever, Harriet Martineau. She said to a friend on some glorious morning, "Doesn't such a day make one feel grateful?" To which her friend quietly replied, "Grateful to whom, my dear?" Some of us have been tasting this summer the joys of travel in enchanting scenery, full of grandeur and manifold loveliness, and have experienced this sense of gratitude over and over again; but we have our answer to the question,

[1] M. Maeterlinck, *Ruysbroeck and the Mystics*, 76.

"Grateful to whom?" Shall we not love Him who gave us these delights and all the satisfactions and stimulus of our lives because He loves us? How strange it seems to read of the late Professor Huxley, in the full career of joyful work, saying that at the end of every day he felt a strong desire to say, "Thank you" to some Power if he could only have known to whom to say it. It should not have been so difficult to say, "Thank you, God!"[1]

¶ When Robert M'Cheyne and Andrew Bonar were in the Holy Land, they went to visit the Garden of Gethsemane. Dr. Bonar thus writes: "The sun had newly risen; few people were upon the road, and the Valley of Jehoshaphat was lonely and still. We read over all the passages of Scripture relating to Gethsemane while seated together there. It seemed nothing wonderful to read of the wanderings of these three disciples, when we remembered that they were sinful men like disciples now; but the compassion, the unwavering love of Jesus appeared by the contrast to be infinitely amazing. For such souls as ours He rent this vale with His strong crying and tears, wetted this ground with His bloody sweat, and set His face like a flint to go forward and die. 'While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' Each of us occupied part of the time alone—in private meditation—and then we joined together in prayer, putting our sins into that cup which our Master drank here, and pleading for our own souls, for our far-distant friends, and for the flocks committed to our care."

(2) *Adoration.*—The shepherds were quite right when they said: "O come let us adore him!" The angels were right when they sang: "Glory to God in the highest!" So we should come to the house of God and bow the head in adoring worship if we believe at all.

¶ What a Sunday! At 8 a.m. we were present at the Lutheran Mass, if I may so call it. The altar, the candles, the comings and goings of the pastor, the litanies sung with responses, all astonished me. However, it is a beautiful idea that pervades all that, and one which we have lost sight of in our Reformed Churches, namely, *adoration*. We go to the preaching (*au prêche*) and that is all.[2]

(3) *Purity.*—The love of God believed in must mean a life of growing purity. If we may have the Son of God within us; if He loved us, and gave Himself for us like that; if He has come like a good shepherd over the hills to find us, and has found us,

[1] J. Warschauer.

[2] *Coillard of the Zambesi*, 162.

then we must live a life, in His strength, of something like correspondence to His; we must confess the sins that we have done; we must be perfectly plain about what our life has been, and how careless and unworthy it has been, if we feel it has been so. Then we must not be content with that. Having got straight with God, we must ask Him to come to our heart.

Come to my heart, Lord Jesus;
There is room in my heart for Thee.

¶ "Look straight into the light, and you will always have the shadows behind." Yes, but more than that, you will see more clearly how to walk. Look straight into the light, and every year you will see more things that you must do, and more clearly the things you must avoid. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."[1]

(4) *Service.*—Lastly, there is the response of service. If He came down from heaven, and so loved the world, we must find a way in which to love our fellow-men as He loved us. Christ's doctrines find their best meaning only in service! Who shall know so well what the Atonement means as they who are striving every day to bring its light into dark places? Who shall understand the mercy of God as those who are toiling helpfully amongst poor, weak-willed men, who, crushed by the hard laws of life, can be raised only by compassion? Who shall catch so full a glimpse of the wisdom of God's purpose as they who, ministering to the needy, the ignorant, the hungry, find how strong are the moral forces which are born, not of constraint, but of love and of free will?

¶ God loves the world. Therefore he loves the men of every nation, of every language, of every creed. He loves the man that jostles me in the street. He loves the man that overreaches me, and deprives me of my rights, or who insults or slanders me. And if I call myself a Christian, I must love them with a deep and holy love, and must be willing even to suffer in order to give light to their darkened eyes, and soften their hard hearts with brotherly affections. Otherwise I have no real fellowship with the Father and the Son. "He that hateth his brother is a murderer, and no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."[2]

¶ Are we ready for the Master's use? Do we really believe in the possibility of the world's redemption? How spacious is

[1] Bishop Winnington Ingram, *The Gospel in Action*, 323.
[2] James Drummond, *Johannine Thoughts*, 40.

our belief? How large is the possibility which we entertain? When we survey the clamant needs of the race, do we discover any "hopeless cases"? Where have we obtained the right to use the word "hopeless"? What evidence or experience will justify us in saying of any man, "He is too far gone"? In what atmosphere of thought and expectancy are we living? Are we dwelling in the Book of Ecclesiastes, or making our home in the Gospel of St. John? Let us ransack the city. Let us rake out, if we can find him, the worst of our race. Let us produce the sin-steeped and the lust-sodden soul, and then let us hear the word of the Master: "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" The first condition of being capable ministers of Christ is to believe in the possibility of the world's salvation.[1]

¶ I shall never forget how Professor Elmslie, in the brief delirium before death, when his mind was wandering, came back over and over again to "God is Love, God is Love; I will go out and tell this to all the world. They do not know it."[2]

Teach me to love the world as thou dost love,
Ready to give my dearest and my best,
Than self more dear, to save it from its sins,
And turn all hearts to thee. Oh! grant the faith
In thy beloved Son, thy holy Lamb,
Which wakes, within, the sleeping life of love,
And makes us one with him who died that men
Might share his life eternal, and might dwell
In thee, from whose exhaustless fulness all
Who look to thee in fervent prayer receive
Thy Spirit's bounteous gift. But from that love
Which clings in fondness to the world's bad ways,
And sinks the soul in its corrupting guile,
Save me, O God; for earth must pass away,
Ambition's pride, and all the idle glare
Of social rank, and wealth's delusive charm.
That which we see is temporal, and soon
Must yield to time's corrosive touch, and sink
To dark oblivion. But the things unseen,
Love, holiness, and truth, eternal stand
Before thy glorious throne, and speak thy word
Within the heart of man. To that blest word
Be all my powers subdued, that I may still
Show forth thy love which quickens and redeems.[3]

[1] J. H. Jowett. [2] W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Lamp of Sacrifice*, 247.
[3] James Drummond, *Johannine Thoughts*, 42.

No More Thirst.

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No More Thirst.

Jesus answered and said unto her, Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.—John iv. 13, 14.

1. Those who have read with care the addresses of Christ must be struck, not only with their illustrative character, but, which is very important in the use of illustrations, with their perfect adaptation to the case in point. The force of His imagery is heightened by the fact that the emblems and figures used were taken from objects which the audience had in view at the time He addressed them, and from external things with which their minds were thoroughly familiar, and in which they had a special interest. When the multitudes sought Him at Capernaum for "the meat which perisheth," He began to speak of "the meat which endureth unto everlasting life." In the case before us, He gradually leads the mind of the woman of Samaria from the material water which she was drawing from the well of Jacob, to the "living water" that He could give, and which would be in her "a well of living water springing up unto eternal life."

2. There are two kinds of wells, one a simple reservoir, another containing the waters of a spring. It is the latter kind that is spoken about here, as is clear not only from the meaning of the word in the Greek, but also from the description of it as "springing up." That suggests at once the activity of a fountain. A fountain is the emblem of motion, not of rest. Its motion is derived from itself, not imparted to it from without. Its "silvery column" rises ever heavenward, though gravitation is too strong for it, and drags it back again. So Christ promised to this ignorant, sinful Samaritan woman that if she chose He would

plant in her soul a gift which would thus well up, by its own inherent energy, and fill her spirit with music, and refreshment, and satisfaction.

I.

The Thirst of the Soul.

"Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again." It is not difficult to discern traces of this thirst in the faces of those whom we meet in the common way. If we take our stand at the corner of the street and scan the faces of the passing crowd, it is only now and again that we gaze upon a countenance which is significant of peace. How rarely the face suggests the joy and the serenity of a healthy satisfaction. We are confronted by an abounding unrest. The majority of people seem to be afflicted with the pain of unsatisfied want. The very faces are suggestive of a disquieting thirst. We have a varied vocabulary in which we describe this prevailing condition:—"restless," "discontented," "dissatisfied," "not right with himself."

¶ Water is an essential of animal and vegetable life. With a constantly recurring appetite we seek it. To have no thirst is a symptom of disease or death. But the soul also, not having life in itself, needs to be sustained from without; and when in a healthy state it seeks by a natural appetite that which will sustain it. And as most of our mental acts are spoken of in terms of the body, as we speak of *seeing* truth and *grasping* it, as if the mind had hands and eyes, so David naturally exclaims, "My soul *thirsts* for the living God." In the living soul there is a craving for that which maintains and revives its life, which is analogous to the thirst of the body for water. The dead alone feel no thirst for God. The soul that is alive sees for a moment the glory and liberty and joy of the life to which God calls us; it feels the attraction of a life of love, purity, and righteousness, but it seems continually to sink from this and to tend to become dull and feeble, and to have no joy in goodness. Just as the healthy body delights in work, but wearies and cannot go on exerting itself for many hours together, but must repair its strength, so the soul soon wearies and sinks back from what is difficult, and needs to be revived by its appropriate refreshment.[1]

¶ I think there is something implanted in man's heart, fallen creature as he is, which defies him to be content with anything

[1] M. Dods.

but God alone. It is a trace of original majesty, which leaves a mark of what he was before the fall. He is always panting for something fresh; and that is no sooner attained than it palls upon his taste. And this strong necessity of loving something makes a man form idols for himself, which he invests with fancied perfections, and when all these fade away in his grasp, and he finds their unsubstantiality, he must become either a misanthrope or a Christian. When a man has learned to know the infinite love of God in Christ to him, then he discovers something which will not elude his hold, and an affection which will not grow cold; for the comparison of God's long-suffering and repeated pardon, with his own heartless ingratitude, convinces him that it is an unchangeable love.[1]

O God, where do they tend—these struggling aims?
What would I have? What is this "sleep" which seems
To bound all? Can there be a waking point
Of crowning life? The soul would never rule;
It would be first in all things, it would have
Its utmost pleasure filled, but, that complete,
Commanding, for commanding, sickens it.
The last point I can trace is—rest beneath
Some better essence than itself, in weakness;
This is "myself," not what I think should be:
And what is that I hunger for but God?[2]

II.

The Wells of the World.

All things that are of earth are unsatisfactory. Our spirit craves for something more than time and sense can yield it. Nothing which comes of earth, even if it should yield a transient satisfaction, can long maintain its excellence. Pointing to the water in Jacob's well, our Lord said, "Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again"; and therein He took up His parable against all earthly things, whether they be fame, or riches, or fleshly pleasure, or aught else beneath the sun. He that drinks at these shallow wells shall not quench his thirst, or if for a time he imagines that he has so done, he will be undeceived, and in a little season the old craving will return. "That which is born of the flesh" is flesh even at its best, and

[1] *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 57. [2] Browning, *Pauline*.

"all flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth." The religion of the flesh shares in the common fate, if it has a man's own self for its author, his own energy as its impulse, and his own opinions for its creed. It may for a little while flourish like the flower of the field, but "the wind passeth over it and it is gone." Waters from his own cistern may stay a man's desires for a space, but ere long he must thirst again.

¶ Too often we try to allay a spiritual thirst by a carnal draught. When Newman in his early life was burdened with the sense of his own shortcomings in the presence of his Lord, and his letters home lacked their usual buoyancy, his mother wrote to him:—"Your father and I fear very much from the tone of your letters that you are depressed. We fear you debar yourself a proper quantity of wine." That is a type of suggestion which is often made to people who are troubled with spiritual unrest. They are recommended to material ministries by which their feverish unrest is only intensified and inflamed. But they "thirst again." Others make an attempt to realize satisfaction and peace by immersing themselves in stimulants like novel-reading and theatre-going, and in the manifold pleasures of society. They intensify the social stimulant. Yet they "thirst again." Others plunge more deeply into business. The songster is languishing! How then? Re-gild his cage. The soul is languishing! How then? Re-gild her cage. Seek for more gold, more gold, and surround the soul with material treasure. And yet the soul refuses to be appeased, and "thirsts again." Or, again, we give opiates to our disquieted and feverish souls. How many people find an opiate in making a promise to amend. They find contentment in their intentions. But the satisfaction is only transient. They speedily awake out of their unnatural rest, and they are thirsty still. Others give themselves the opiate of self-disparagement. Many a man thinks he is becoming better because he severely condemns himself. They esteem it a sign of virtue to denounce themselves as fools. They discover a sort of spiritual comfort from their own self-severity. All these are pitiable evasions. At the best they are only transient ministries, which, when their immediate influence passes away, leave us in deepened disquietude and intensified unrest.[1]

¶ No man is so poor, so low, so narrow in capacity, so limited in heart and head, but he needs a whole God to make him restful.

[1] J. H. Jowett, *Thirsting for the Springs*, 140.

Nothing else will. To seek for satisfaction elsewhere is like sailors who in their desperation, when the water-tanks are empty, slake their thirst with the treacherous blue that washes cruelly along the battered sides of their ship. A moment's alleviation is followed by the recurrence, in tenfold intensity, of the pangs of thirst, and by madness, and death. Do not drink the salt water that flashes and rolls by your side when you can have recourse to the fountain of life that is with God.[1]

¶ There is a Persian legend of the well of Chidher, the fountain of eternal youth, which men are ever seeking and never find.

Thee have thousands sought in vain
Over land and barren main,

Chidher's well,—of which men say,
That thou makest young again;

Fountain of eternal youth,
Washing free from every stain.

To thy waves the aged moons
Aye betake them, when they wane;

And the suns their golden light,
While they bathe in thee, retain.

From that fountain drops are flung,
Mingling with the vernal rain,

And the old earth clothes itself
In its young attire again.

Thitherward the freckled trout
Up the water-courses strain,

And the timid wild gazelles
Seek it through the desert plain.

Great Iskander, mighty lord,
Sought that fountain, but in vain;

Through the land of darkness went
In its quest with fruitless pain,

When by wealth of conquered worlds
Did his thirst unslaked remain.

[1] A. Maclaren.

Many more with parched lip
Must lie down and dizzy brain,

And of that, a fountain sealed
Unto them, in death complain.

If its springs to thee are known,
Weary wanderer, tell me plain.

From beneath the throne of God
It must well, a lucid vein;

To its sources lead me, Lord,
That I do not thirst again,

And my lips not any more
Shall the earth's dark waters stain.[1]

III.

The Eternal Spring.

1. What, then, is this "living water"—this thirst-quenching, soul-satisfying gift promised by Christ? The answer may be put in various ways, which really all come to one. It is Himself, the unspeakable Gift, His own greatest gift; or it is the Spirit "which they that believe on him should receive," and whereby He comes and dwells in men's hearts; or it is the resulting life, kindred with the life bestowed, a consequence of the indwelling Christ and the present Spirit. And so the promise is that they who believe on Him and rest upon His love shall receive into their spirits a new life-principle which shall rise in their hearts like a fountain, "springing up unto everlasting life."

2. As regards this wonderful water, there are four points to be specially noted.

(1) *It is a gift of God.*—"The water that I shall *give* him," says Christ. There is no suggestion as to digging deep with much learning into the bowels of mysterious truth to find the water for ourselves; this priceless draught is freely handed out to us by our Redeemer, without our bringing either bucket or line. There is no hint in the text that we are to purchase the life-giving water; it is presented to us without money and without price. There is

[1] R. C. Trench, *Chidher's Well.*

no allusion to a certain measure of fitness to qualify us for the draught, it is purely a gift to be received by us here and now. Our Lord told the woman that had she known the gift of God she would have asked and He would have given. Sinner as she was, she had only to ask and have. There is no other way of obtaining eternal life but as the free gift of sovereign grace.

¶ The divine gift of eternal life is not in us by nature. It cannot be produced in us by culture, or infused into us by ceremonies, or propagated in us by natural descent; it must come as a boon of infinite charity from heaven, unpurchased, undeserved. Wisdom cannot impart it, power cannot fashion it, money cannot buy it, merit cannot procure it, grace alone can give it. If men desire wages they may earn them beneath the mastership of sin, for "the *wages* of sin is death." On the side of God all is of grace, for "the *gift* of God is eternal life." Whoever, then, is to be saved must be saved by the boundless charity of God—in other words, by the free gift of the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord.[1]

(2) *It is a fountain within.*—"It shall be *in* him," it is something that we may carry about with us in our hearts, inseparable from our being, free from all possibility of being filched away by violence, rent from us by sorrows, or even parted from us by death. What a man has outside of him he only seems to have. Our real possessions are those which have passed into the substance of our souls. All else we shall leave behind. The only good is inward good; and this water of life slakes our thirst because it flows into the deepest place of our being, and abides there for ever.

¶ I stood a little while ago in the fine old ruin of Middleham Castle. I passed beyond the outer shell, and beyond the inner defences into the keep, and there in the innermost sanctum of the venerable pile was the old well. The castle was independent of outside supplies. If it were besieged it had resources of water at its own heart. The changing seasons made no difference to the gracious supply. That is the purpose of our Master in placing the "well" within us. He wants to make us independent of external circumstances. Whatever be the season that reigns without, He wants fulness and vitality to reign within. So the Master's gift is the gift of a well, "springing up," leaping up, "unto eternal life." We are renewed "by his Spirit in the inner man."[2]

[1] C. H. Spurgeon. [2] J. H. Jowett.

(3) *It is a springing fountain.*—"The water that I shall give him shall become in him a springing fountain"; it shall not lie there stagnant, but shall leap like a living thing, up into the sunshine, and flash there, turned into diamonds when the bright rays smile upon it. Here is the promise of activity. There seems small blessing, in this overworked world, in a promise of more active exertion; but what an immense part of our nature lies dormant and torpid if we are not Christians! How much of the work that is done is dreary, wearisome, collar-work, against the grain. Do not the wheels of life often go slowly? Are we not often weary of the inexpressible monotony and fatigue? And do we not go to our work sometimes, though with a fierce feeling of "need-to-do-it," yet also with inward repugnance? And are there not great parts of our nature that have never wakened into activity at all, and are ill at ease, because there is no field of action provided for them? The mind is like mill-stones; if we do not put the wheat into them to grind, they will grind each other's faces. So some of us are fretting ourselves to pieces, or are sick of a vague disease, and are morbid and miserable because the highest and noblest parts of our nature have never been brought into exercise. Surely this promise of Christ's should come as a true gospel to such, offering, as it does, if we will trust ourselves to Him, a springing fountain of activity in our hearts that shall fill our whole being with joyous energy, and make it a delight to live and to work. It will bring to us new powers, new motives; it will set all the wheels of life going at double speed. We shall be quickened by the presence of that mighty power, even as a dim taper is brightened and flames up when plunged into a jar of oxygen. And life will be delightsome in its hardest toil, when it is toil for the sake of, and by the indwelling strength of, that great Lord and Master of our work.

¶ The indwelling power of the Holy Spirit rises superior to all disadvantages, like a spring which cannot be kept under, do what we may. Our engineers and builders know how hard it is to bind up the earth-floods from overflowing, and the spiritual floods are yet more unconquerable. It is wonderful how springs will bubble up in places where we least expect them. The great desert of Sahara will no doubt be made a very easy county to traverse, and, perhaps, may even become a fertile plain, from the fact that there is water everywhere at no very great depth below

the surface, and where it is reached an oasis is formed. The government of Algeria has sent engineers into parts of the Sahara bordering on the French possession, and these men have bored the rock by Artesian wells, and greatly astonished the natives; for in the wilderness have waters leaped out and streams in the desert. At the magic touch of the living water, palm trees have sprung up and an undergrowth of vegetation, so that the solitary places have been made to sing together. When the Lord gives our souls to drink from the fountains of the great deep of His own eternal love, and to have a vital principle of grace within us, our wilderness rejoices and blossoms as the rose, and the Sahara around us cannot wither our verdure; our soul is as an oasis, though all around is barrenness.[1]

> In the mid garden doth a fountain stand;
> From font to font its waters fall alway,
> Freshening the leaves by their continual play:—
> Such often have I seen in southern land,
> While every leaf, as though by light winds fanned,
> Has quivered underneath the dazzling spray,
> Keeping its greenness all the sultry day,
> While others pine aloof, a parchèd band.
> And in the mystic garden of the soul
> A fountain, nourished from the upper springs,
> Sends ever its clear waters up on high,
> Which while a dewy freshness round it flings,
> All plants which there acknowledge its control
> Show fair and green, else drooping, pale, and dry.[2]

(4) *It is an eternal fountain.*—The water of a fountain rises by its own impulse, but however its silver column may climb it always falls back into its marble basin. But this fountain rises higher, and at each successive jet higher, tending towards, and finally touching, its goal, which is at the same time its source. The water seeks its own level, and the fountain climbs until it reaches Him from whom it comes, and the eternal life in which He lives. The Christian character is identical in both worlds, and however the forms and details of pursuit may vary, the essential principle remains one. So that the life of a Christian man on earth and his life in heaven are but one stream, as it were, which may, indeed, like some of those American rivers, run for a time through a deep, dark cañon, or in an underground

[1] C. H. Spurgeon. [2] Trench, *Poems*, 144.

passage, but comes out at the farther end into broader, brighter plains and summer lands; where it flows with a quieter current and with the sunshine reflected on its untroubled surface, into the calm ocean. He has one gift and one life for earth and heaven—Christ and His Spirit, and the life that is consequent upon both.

¶ "It shall be in him a well of water *springing up unto eternal life.*" The grace continues with us, and overflows into a blessed immortality. The Spirit that redeems will also perfect. Whatever may be our estate when it finds us, our ultimate attainments will be the likeness of the Lord. The living water rises from Heaven, and rises towards Heaven. We shall at length be presented blameless before the Throne of God.

¶ "Never thirst." That does not mean that in the Christian life desire is ended. "The ill of all ills is the death of desire." In the redeemed life desire is intense and wakeful. There is desiring, but no despairing. There is longing, but no languishing. There is fervour, but no fever. There is aspiration and contentment. There is striving and rest. We still thirst for the fulness of grace not yet received, but there is no pain in the thirst. In the Christian life the very thirst for greater fulness is itself a delight. If I may quote Calvin, "Believers know desire, but they do not know drought."[1]

My spirit longeth for Thee,
  Within my troubled breast,
Altho' I be unworthy
  Of so divine a Guest.

Of so divine a Guest,
  Unworthy tho' I be,
Yet has my heart no rest,
  Unless it come from Thee.

Unless it come from Thee,
  In vain I look around;
In all that I can see,
  No rest is to be found.

No rest is to be found,
  But in Thy blessed love;
O! let my wish be crown'd,
  And send it from above![2]

[1] J. H. Jowett. [2] J. Byrom.

True Worship.

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True Worship.

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth.—John iv. 24.

1. The conversation between Christ and the woman of Samaria began on common topics. By and by it became more deep and interesting. He to whom all things here were types could not converse without a Divine meaning in all He said. A draught of water connected itself with the mystery of life.

As soon as she discovered His spiritual character she put the question of her day about "the place where men ought to worship." Christ took the opportunity of defining spiritual worship. He spoke of a new worship essentially different from the old. He made religion spiritual, He pointed out the difference between religion and theology, and He revealed the foundation on which true worship must rest. A new time was coming for a new worship: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth."

2. It was to a very lowly soul that Jesus thus revealed Himself. She was a poor and unenlightened peasant, a woman, a Samaritan. It had been, too, a frail and erring life, that must have fallen into many mistakes, known many contumelies, endured slights and disheartenments untold. "Thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: this hast thou said truly." How chequered and spotted an experience is there disclosed, one full of tragedies and unstanched wounds! But just to such an one Jesus Christ elects to make the revelation that the true tie between God and man lies deeper than externals, that it is an interior life which transcends all accidental differences of birth and nationality, of station and sex, even of creed and worship; that alike to Jew and to Samaritan, man and woman,

saint or sinner, worshipper on Mount Zion or worshipper on Mount Gerizim, it is "a gift," a gift of God, a personal relation established between the individual soul and the Divine life-giving source of all. It is a secret between ourselves and God. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Christ tells us here all that we need to know about the worship that is acceptable to God. He tells us—

I. The Foundation of true Worship.

II. The Nature of true Worship.

I.

Its Foundation.

The first essential of true worship is a true appreciation of God's character. The foundation on which the new worship rests is a revelation made by Christ respecting the character of God.

1. God is *spirit*. We should greatly mistake the meaning of this if we took it as a theological definition of the Being of God. It is not theological, but practical. It is chiefly negative. It says what God is not. He is not matter. He has not a form. "A spirit hath not flesh and bones."

(1) What is meant by spirit? There are false notions which regard it as attenuated gas, a wreath of air or vapour. This is only subtle materialism. Consider the universe, with the sun and stars, the harmony of the planets—all this force, order, harmony is from God. The spring season, with bursting vegetation—its life is God. Our own minds, their thought and feeling—that is spirit. God, therefore, is the *Mind* of the universe. This, then, was the great truth, that God is Mind, not separated by conditions of space and time from His creatures.

(2) It is difficult for us to conceive of an absolutely spiritual being, without body, parts, or form; of One who is eternal as regards time, without beginning and without end; and infinite as regards space, everywhere present, filling all things, or rather containing all within Himself. It is this idea, baffling to our imagination, of the infinite Being of God that is the foundation of

spiritual worship. It is because God's Being is infinite that He is present alike to all, and takes cognizance of all persons and their concerns, the least as well as those which seem to us the greatest.

(3) The ordinary objector reasons thus: All the persons I know are visible, subject to the scrutiny of eye and ear and touch. I can well understand expressions of love, thanksgivings, cries for help, addressed to a being thus accessible to ordinary sense. But these people call when there is no one visible to hear and answer; they address themselves to vacancy, and throw out their vain cries to the thin air. It is true they profess to be addressing a Spirit; but that means something which is not seen, heard, touched, handled,—an influence wholly beyond the scope of my senses. What evidence is there that such an impalpable Being hears and sees, knows, and wills, and acts? How can I be sure that it exists at all?

(4) Yet the facts of the universe are not altered by our incredulity, our unwillingness or incapacity to perceive them. The realm of Spirit is a reality, spiritual laws govern everything, though we ignore both. To vulgar scepticism it might suffice to reply that its argument confuses Personality with the sensible signs of its presence. Wedded to materialist ideas it mistakes the visible, the audible, the tangible, for that which manifests its own reality and activity through these, but is not itself identical with one or all of them. It confounds the outward form with the inward essence; the symbol with the thing signified; the shell with the substance. It grossly identifies the body with the man himself. It argues as if the eye were identical with seeing, or the ear with hearing. It confounds the organ and instrument with that which acts through it. If it is true, as St. John has written, that "No man hath seen God at any time," it is also true that no man hath at any time seen *a person*. Strictly speaking, *persons* are not visible, tangible, subject to the scrutiny of sense. For a person is surely not the group of related impressions present at a given moment to my sensorium; a man is not a certain outline or coloured surface stamped upon my retina, combined perhaps with certain vibrations of my auditory nerve and certain impulses conveyed through my nerves of touch. When we speak of a man or a person, we mean not these, but rather the unseen, unheard, unfelt reality which is the cause of them all, and which reveals its

own existence to our perception through such mediating effects. Understand the terms of this statement, and it is impossible for us to deny its truth.

(5) In our conceptions of God let us have no images of the fancy, no material realization. Stop every attempt to give any kind of embodiment to the Father. Leave it all indeterminate; put anything else away as a trespass and a presumption. The willingness to do this, the power to do this, is part of the discipline of the present life; it is the faith of our worship. All that we can safely have before us is quality, attributes. God is wisdom, God is power, God is greatness, God is holiness, God is love. Enshrined in those, as in a deep sanctuary, is the Infinite, the Unsearchable,—that is God. But we can see the enshrining only, the rest is hidden. It is there, and we speak to it, and we hear it, and we deal with it, and we feel it; but it is far above all sense, it is a name, it is a mystery, it is a Spirit, it is God.

¶ God is a Spirit. This relates to the nature of God; and as a spirit is the most excellent of beings that we have any notions of, God is represented under this character to heighten our thoughts of Him. We indeed know but little of the nature of spirits; the most of our acquaintance with them lies in the consciousness we have of our own souls, which all allow to be the noblest part of the man. And the most natural, obvious thought that arises in our minds about a spirit is that it is an incorporeal and invisible being, with life and action, understanding and will.[1]

Observe yon concave blue,
That seems to close around our human view,
And ends by sun and star
Our keenest survey of those heavens afar.

And yet we know full well,
False is the specious tale our senses tell;
That is no azure sky,
Or solid vault, that meets our lifted eye.

What curtains round our gaze,
The background of the sun or starry maze,
Is but blue-tinted light
That veils from us the aërial infinite.

[1] Guyse.

And so, when we define
Great heaven's immensity by verbal sign,
We act as though our bent
Were here again to feign a *firmament.*

Words in array we place,
And deem therewith we see God face to face.
Poor fools, and blind; not seeing
Our words but mask and hide His unsearched Being.[1]

2. The great truth that God is a Spirit, purely held, would be the best corrective of false doctrines in religion, the richest spring of peace, the most constant inspiration of duty. Examine a narrow creed, and it will not be difficult to point out where it forgets that God is a Spirit. A heart not at rest is a heart that does not know the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. A dishonoured conscience, a violated sentiment, a rebellious will, are only other names for a broken fellowship with the Father of our spirits. A soul cleansed from *unspiritual* thoughts of God, and in daily communion with Him, however far it might be from the fulness of objective Truth, would have in it no springs of error, of trouble, or of sin.

(1) The first error that arises from an unspiritual conception of God is a tendency to localize God. The woman's question was, in fact, "Where?" Christ's reply was, "Nowhere in particular—everywhere." This question lies at the root of all superstition. It is observable among the heathen, who confine the agency of a god to a certain district; among the uneducated poor of our own country, in their notions of a cemetery; and among the more refined, in the clinging mysterious idea which they attach to a church, an altar, and the elements of the sacrament. Let us define what we mean by sanctity of place. It is a thing merely subjective, not objective; it is relative to us. It belongs to that law of association by which a train of ideas returns more easily by suggestion in some one place than in another. Worship in a festive room or over a shop, would suggest notions uncongenial with devotion. Hence the use of *setting apart* or consecrating places for worship. There is no other sanctity of place. We hear an objection to this. It is said to be dangerous to say this:

[1] John Owen.

it will unsettle people's minds; a little of this illusion is wholesome, especially for the poor. Christ did not so reason. Consider how unsettling this was to the woman. The little religion she had clung to Gerizim. The shock of being told that it was not holy might have unsettled all her religion. Did Christ hesitate one moment? He was concerned only with truth. And we are concerned only with truth. Some people are afraid of truth. As if God's truth could be dangerous! The straight road is ever the nearest. People *must* bear, and shall, what an earnest mind dares to say. Is God there or not? If not, at our peril we say He is.[1]

(2) A second error is the idea that forms are immutable. "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain," therefore so must we. How much of the mischief of the separation of sects, with all the bitterness and mistrust that have come with it, has arisen from the fact that the form of worship has been mistaken for the worship itself.

¶ It was about one o'clock in the morning. I was the only white man then on the island, and all the natives had been fast asleep for hours! Yet I literally pitched my hat into the air, and danced like a schoolboy round and round that printing-press; till I began to think, Am I losing my reason? Would it not be liker a missionary to be upon my knees, adoring God for this first portion of His blessed Word ever printed in this new language? Friend, bear with me, and believe me, that was as true worship as ever was David's dancing before the Ark of his God![2]

(3) A third error is to mistake the object of worship. There is a feeling of devoutness inherent in the human mind. We hear the solemn tones of a child when repeating his prayer or hymn. Before what is greater, wiser, better than himself man bows instinctively. But the question is, *what* will he worship? The heathen bent before Power. To him the Universe was alive with Deity; he saw God in the whirlwind, in the lightning, and the thunder. But the forces of Nature are not God. The philosopher bows before Wisdom. Science tells him of electricity, gravitation, force. He looks down on warm devoutness; for he sees only contrivance and mind in Nature. He admires all calmly, without

[1] F. W. Robertson.

[2] *John G. Paton*, i. 202.

enthusiasm. He calls it Rational Religion. This also is ignorance. The spiritual man bows before Goodness, "The true worshippers worship the Father," "We know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews," that is, God is intelligible in Christ as Love, Goodness, Purity.

¶ God is a Spirit in nature; but He is a Father in character. This was part of Christ's revelation of God to the woman of Samaria. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship *the Father*." Jesus was the herald of the Golden Age, and of the common worship of the universal Father. On that very day the Golden Age was dawning, for He, rising above the limits of a national religion, was seeking one outside its fold. True, as He declared to this woman, salvation was of the Jews. Unto the Jews God had revealed Himself by prophet and priest, and by means of ritual. Unto them had been granted special revelation; yet, notwithstanding all their privileges, the Jewish people had not yet learned the full glory of the Divine character. To them, God was Jehovah, the High and Mighty One inhabiting eternity; He was infinite, all-powerful, the God of Israel; but the coming of Jesus unveiled Deity, and revealed Him as the one Father of all humanity. Before His coming, men had dreaded Deity; but He, leading the children of men into the presence of the Infinite, said, "When ye pray, say, Our Father." Thus He revealed the character of God to be that of infinite love.[1]

(4) A fourth error is a mistake about the nature of reverence. This Samaritan woman had what is often called reverence—veneration for antiquity, zeal for her Church, lingering recollections of the old mountain, respect for a prophet. But what was her life? He with whom she then lived was not her husband. In other words, reverence, veneration, awe, are feelings which belong to the imagination and are neither good nor bad: they may go along with religion, but also they may not. A man may kneel to sublime things, yet never have bent his heart to goodness and purity. A man may be reverential and yet impure. Next examine a man who is called irreverent. Constitutionally so framed that he does not happen to thrill at painted windows, Gothic architecture, and solemn music, is he, therefore, without veneration? Take him out into God's grand universe, or put before him Christ's character: is there no adoration, no deep

[1] G. E. Walters, *The Deserted Christ*, 78.

intense love? Tell him of a self-denying action: is there no moisture in his eye? Tempt him to meanness: is there no indignant scorn? The man has bowed his soul before Justice, Mercy, Truth, and therefore stands erect before everything else that this world calls sublime.

¶ The enjoyment of noble architecture and music is not worship, and may be mistaken for it. The hush which falls on us, walking the aisles of a church of eight hundred years; the thrill of nerves and heart as the glorious praise begins, whose echoes fail amid fretted vaults and clustered shafts; all that feeling, solemn as it is, has no necessary connection with worshipping God in spirit and in truth. And we may delude ourselves with the belief that we are offering spiritual worship when it is all a mere matter of natural emotion, which the most godless man could share.[1]

(5) A fifth error is the failure to distinguish between interest in theology and interest in religion. Here was a woman living in sin, and yet deeply interested in a religious controversy. She found, doubtless, a kind of safeguard to rest on in the perception of this keen interest. Her religion was almost nothing, her theology most orthodox. Theological controversy sharpens our disputative faculties and wakens our speculative ones. Religion is love to God and man. We do not always distinguish between theology and religion. We make skill in controversy a test of spirituality. It is but a poor test. The way the woman questioned Christ is a specimen of a common feeling. The moment Christ appeared she examined His views. She did not ask whether the Man before her was pure and spotless, or whether His life was spent in doing good; but was He sound upon the vital question of the Temple?

¶ An elderly minister was asked to take the catechizing of the congregation in a parish in the pastoral uplands of the South of Scotland. He was warned against the danger of putting questions to a certain shepherd, who had made himself master of more divinity than some of his clerical contemporaries could boast, and who enjoyed nothing better than, out of the question put to him, to engage in an argument with the minister on some of the deepest problems of theology. The day of the ordeal at last came, the old doctor ascended the pulpit, and after the preliminary

[1] A. K. H. Boyd, *Sunday Afternoons in a University City*, 87.

service put on his spectacles and unfolded the roll of the congregation. To the utter amazement of everybody, he began with the theological shepherd, John Scott. Up started the man, a tall, gaunt, sunburnt figure, with his maud over his shoulder, his broad blue bonnet on the board in front of him, and such a look of grim determination on his face as showed how sure he felt of the issue of the logical encounter to which he believed he had been challenged from the pulpit. The minister, who had clearly made up his mind as to the line of examination to be followed with this pugnacious theologian, looked at him calmly for a few moments, and then in a gentle voice asked, "Who made you, John?" The shepherd, prepared for questions on some of the most difficult points of our faith, was taken aback by being asked what every child in the parish could answer. He replied in a loud and astonished tone, "Wha made *me*?" "It was the Lord God that made you, John," quietly interposed the minister. "Who redeemed you, John?" Anger now mingled with indignation as the man shouted, "Wha redeemed *me*?" The old divine, still in the same mild way, reminded him "It was the Lord Jesus that redeemed you, John," and then asked further, "Who sanctified you, John?" Scott, now thoroughly aroused, roared out, "Wha sanctified ME?" The clergyman paused, looked at him calmly, and said, "It was the Holy Ghost that sanctified you, John Scott, if, indeed, ye be sanctified. Sit ye doon, my man, and learn your questions better the next time you come to the catechizing." The shepherd was never able to hold his head up in the parish thereafter.[1]

3. Now see how great this truth is. That God is a Spirit comes nearer to the business and the bosoms of men, to our real interests, to our belief in progress, to our feeling of God's Fatherhood, to our sense of man's brotherhood, than any other truth. Is there a Church laying down dogmatic terms of salvation? This rebukes it: God is a Spirit, and the spirits that desire Him He makes His own. Is there a merely conventional worship, a merely authoritative religion, a merely ceremonial, ecclesiastical way of approaching God? This disowns it: only those who are in personal communion with Him know Him at all, and they may know Him to their full content. Is there an upright man, a devout heart, misunderstood or forsaken by the world? This sustains him: God is a Spirit, and brings all things to light. Is there a conscience that would hide itself from the light? This disables

[1] Sir Archibald Geikie, *Scottish Reminiscences*, 72.

it: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" "The darkness and the light are both alike to thee."

¶ Is there a troubled mind, a spirit that cannot find peace? What will quiet it? Nothing but some sense of the Infinite as very near to us; it may be from a glance at the unfathomable depths of Nature, with awe and shame at the contrast between our fretful selfishness and the silent realities of God in which we feel we have a part. To gaze upon the face of Nature is sometimes to be brought under the power of a calm and cleansing spirit then present to us; and what is religion but a quickening of the soul under the sense that a Spirit of Purity and Love is acting and looking upon us? And if ever the solemnity and beauty which *man's* workmanship can produce does in its highest examples, in a cathedral, or in the Angel of the Resurrection from the great sculptor's hand, contribute something to religious emotion, how much more may the sense of the Infinite come upon us from the spiritual aspects of the Temple not made with hands; still more if with understanding hearts we could gaze into the majestic face of Christ; still more if, led by Christ up to the Throne, into the real Presence, we could bring ourselves to look intently, with a full trust, into the fatherly face of God![1]

¶ He who worships the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, must, in all the qualities of his soul, in all the relations of his life, be a *better* man than the atheist, than the man who denies the existence of God. The man who worships a stone is a better man than he who worships nothing. The man who falls down before carven wood, or worships the beasts of the field, is a grander nature than he who never bows his head in prayer, and never lifts up his heart in aspiration and religious desire. The tendency of worship is to elevate our nature. He who worships sincerely, however ignorantly, is the better for his worship; he is enlarged in his nature, his outlook upon things is widened, he is led away from self-trust, and is taught to depend upon a power, not lower, but higher, and in his estimation better, than his own.[2]

II.

Its Nature.

To worship is man's highest glory. He was created for fellowship with God: of that fellowship worship is the sublimest

[1] J. H. Thom, *A Spiritual Faith*, 12. [2] J. Parker.

expression. All the exercises of the religious life—meditation and prayer, love and faith, surrender and obedience, all culminate in worship. Recognizing what God is in His holiness, His glory, and His love, realizing what we are as sinful creatures, and as the Father's redeemed children, in worship we gather up our whole being and present ourselves to our God to offer Him the adoration and the glory which are His due. The truest and fullest and nearest approach to God is worship. Every sentiment and every service of the religious life is included in it: to worship is man's highest destiny, because in it God is all.

1. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." It is not a question of *place*. "Neither in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem is the place." It is no question of cathedral, or church, or chapel, or hall. Wherever a heart yearns for God and pours itself forth, there is God's House, there is God's blessing. Every sick-room can be a House of God; every hospital ward a House of God; every lonely heart away in the deepest solitude in seeking Him can find His House. It is not a question of *time*. If this true idea of worship be once grasped, that it is not an outward form, not outward ceremony, not at set times, but ever, always, the going out of hearts towards and after Him, it will mean that our worship will find expression in our home life, in our factory life, in our shop life, in our dock life, in our so-called secular life, and everywhere, always, all things, sacred and secular, will be blended in one lifelong act of worship, our heart going out to God in spirit and in truth.

The Lord is in His Holy Place
  In all things near and far!
Shekinah of the snowflake, He,
  And Glory of the star,
And Secret of the April land
  That stirs the field to flowers,
Whose little tabernacles rise
  To hold Him through the hours.

He hides Himself within the love
  Of those whom we love best;
The smiles and tones that make our homes
  Are shrines by Him possessed;

He tents within the lonely heart
And shepherds every thought;
We find Him not by seeking far,—
We lose Him not, unsought.

Our art may build its Holy Place,
Our feet on Sinai stand,
But Holiest of Holies knows
No tread, no touch of hand;
The listening soul makes Sinai still
Wherever we may be,
And in the vow, "Thy will be done!"
Lies all Gethsemane.[1]

2. We cannot read these words and not feel that the very genius and essence of the Christian religion is an exceeding simplicity. Had Christ reckoned externals of great importance, He certainly would have said so here. Those externals may be convenient, and they are helpful; and therefore the Church may justly, and with great propriety and benefit, ordain them. But if Christ's words are to be taken in their plainest signification, God does not now require or command them. They are not a part of the new legislation; rather, they are decidedly and studiously omitted. For in this matter, it is clear that a contrast is drawn between the Samaritan and the Jewish ritual—which were both of them highly addressed to the senses—and that which Christ was introducing. He declares such things to be passed away. And nothing is laid down as the will of God respecting public worship, but this only—it must be spiritual and true.

¶ In our approaches to God, the frame of mind is everything. Like worships like. God is mystery, worship is faith; God is wisdom, worship is thought; God is love, worship is affection; God is truth, worship is sincerity; God is holiness, worship is purity; God is omnipresence, worship is everywhere; God is eternity, worship is always. Words are good, because words react on the mind, and clear and fix it; but words are not worship. Forms are good, because forms are stays and helps to our infirmities; but forms are not worship. Holy places, holy things, holy persons are good, because in such a defiled world as this, what is sacred must be isolated; but no places, no things, no persons are worship. Sacraments are good, because the sacra-

[1] William C. Gannett.

ments are the very incorporations and the essences of our salvation; but sacraments are not worship. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth."[1]

I sit within my room, and joy to find
That Thou who always lov'st art with me here,
That I am never left by Thee behind,
But by Thyself Thou keep'st me ever near;
The fire burns brighter when with Thee I look,
And seems a kinder servant sent to me;
With gladder heart I read Thy holy book,
Because Thou art the eyes by which I see;
This aged chair, that table, watch, and door
Around in ready service ever wait;
Nor can I ask of Thee a menial more
To fill the measure of my large estate,
For Thou Thyself, with all a Father's care,
Where'er I turn, art ever with me there.[2]

i. Worship in Spirit.

1. God is Spirit, and what He reveals to man must be made through the medium of Spirit. If He were possessed of a material form, the way of recognition would be through the senses, but Spirit can only be spiritually discerned. God cannot be seen in the Bible, He cannot be seen in Nature, except through the exercise of the spiritual vision. Our worship, therefore, must consist in the effort of the human spirit to identify itself with the Divine, not in a mystic, self-destroying unity, but in the direction of its aspirations and its will. We seek to bring our souls into a state of conformity with God's all-perfect will.

¶ The true worship is not the prostration of the body in kneeling, nor even the prostration of the soul in distant adoration, but the yielding of our living powers willingly and gladly to the Divine influence within us. There is an expression of the great Stoic emperor, Marcus Aurelius, who perhaps came nearer than any other non-Christian of the West to the Christian life and spirit: "I reverence the God who is within." That God has been fully made known to us in Jesus Christ, and we can give a grander significance to this expression. Our God is within us. Let us allow our thoughts to be enlightened and our energies

[1] James Vaughan. [2] Jones Very.

quickened by the spirit of holiness—the unseen, constraining power of righteousness—and we are practising the true worship.[1]

2. Before the Incarnation, man dared approach God only through priest and altar, and in an earthly temple. Jesus came to erect one altar—His Cross,—and to offer one sacrifice—Himself. He was born that He might die; and over all His pathway there fell the shadow of the Cross. The Cross was interwoven into all His life. Galilee would have made Him King; the whole region of the North went after Him. He said, "I go to Jerusalem." He deliberately journeyed thither, everything in His journey pointing to His doom. The broken bread in the supper represented His broken body; the red wine His spilt blood. They nailed Him to His Cross, and there He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. "It is finished," He cried; "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Then the veil of the Temple was rent asunder. The Holy of Holies was open to mortal gaze. There was no longer any need for earthly priest or altar. The world had become a temple, the human heart the shrine of the Holy Ghost.

¶ Christ came to bring man's spirit into immediate contact with God's Spirit; to sweep away everything intermediate. In lonely union, face to face, man's spirit and God's Spirit must come together. It is a grand thought! Let us aspire to this, to greatness, goodness! So will our spirits mingle with the Spirit of the Everlasting.[2]

3. The law of acceptable Christian worship is briefly this: it must be the worship of "the heart," that is, of the will. Not of the voice merely; not of the hands merely; not of the bended knees merely; not of the decorously and comprehensively expressed prayer merely; not of the sweet incense merely; not of the lamb slain and burnt on the altar merely; not of the gorgeously-arrayed High Priest, nor yet of the simply-robed Scotch minister merely; not of feelings touched by old memories of our own departed days, and of those who used to worship with us long ago, but who will worship with us on earth no more; not of any or all of these things merely—but of the will.

If our worship is of "the heart," it follows that to be real we must have a real religious experience. Experience is the very

[1] Dean Fremantle, *The Gospel of the Secular Life*, 209. [2] F. W. Robertson.

soul or religion. Properly speaking, we do not begin to be religious until God and the soul have somehow come face to face. It is true that as children we are taught religious truth, but we have not experienced it, we are taught it; and there is a sense in which, if we receive that truth as little children, humbly, trustfully, teachably, we are truly religious and belong to the Kingdom of God. To very few is God more real than He is to the little child. But when that has been said, it needs to be repeated that there can be no real religion without a real religious experience. Religion is not in word alone; it is not in the hearing of the Word, it is not in the explanation of certain truths, but it is profoundly and most practically in spirit, in experience. God is not real to us until we have made our own discovery of Him in our life.

¶ This Pearl of Eternity is the Church or Temple of God within thee, the consecrated Place of Divine Worship, where alone thou canst worship God in Spirit and in Truth. In Spirit, because thy spirit is that alone in thee which can unite and cleave unto God, and receive the workings of His Divine Spirit upon thee. In Truth, because this Adoration in the Spirit is that Truth and Reality of which all outward Forms and Rites, though instituted by God, are only the Figure for a Time, but this Worship is Eternal. Accustom thyself to the Holy Service of this inward Temple. In the midst of it is the Fountain of Living Water, of which thou mayest drink and live for ever. There the Mysteries of thy Redemption are celebrated, or rather opened in Life and Power. There the Supper of the Lamb is kept; the Bread that came down from Heaven, that giveth life unto the world, is thy true nourishment: all is done, and known in real Experience, in a living sensibility of the Work of God on the Soul. There the Birth, the Life, the Sufferings, the Death, the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, are not merely remembered, but inwardly found and enjoyed as the real states of thy soul, which has followed Christ in the Regeneration.[1]

ii. Worship in Truth.

Our worship must be "in truth"; truth as regards God Himself, and truth as regards our own state.

1. We need to have *a true conception of God*, as far as we know Him, as He is revealed to us through Christ. The Samaritans

[1] William Law.

had not a true knowledge; the Jews knew more, they knew Him through the Prophets, though their knowledge was incomplete. They knew that Messiah should come. To worship the true God and not idols, that was the elementary teaching, the preliminary idea. But to us it is given beyond this to conceive aright of the living and unseen God. The Father is revealed to us in and through the Son—on whom human eyes have dwelt. And prayer becomes a different thing when it is a child's cry to a Father's heart, a child clinging to Him in His paternal character; and it is through this sense of filial relationship that we approach that inner embrace of the Father's heart. The Son sympathizes with us in our hardness and pain. He has tasted all our trial, only without the sin, and our prayer through Him reaches the Father's Heart through the sympathetic agency of the Son, the Spirit helping our infirmities and giving force to our prayer.

¶ Recent researches into the origins of the Old Testament have proved that the factor in the extraordinary development of moral and religious truth, which is so discernible in the history of Israel and in their gradual ascent to the loftiest heights of spiritual knowledge, from the low levels of life which they had once occupied with their Semitic neighbours, was the impression upon the people as a whole through the wonderful deeds of their history and the experience of their greatest minds, of the *character* of God.[1]

¶ Our worship must conform to our best intellectual conceptions about God and His will. Our Lord Himself once drew a powerful contrast between the influence of a higher and a lower estimate of God's character on the actions of men. He told His disciples that the time would come when "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you," said He, "because they have not known the Father." That is, although they believed in God, they yet ignored the special revelation made by Jesus Christ of the Fatherhood of God. Ignorance of this revelation has been the origin of some of the most terrible crimes against humanity that have ever disgraced the world. Hundreds of men and women have been roasted to death by order of Inquisitors, who, veiling their cruelty under the term *auto-da-fé*, witnessed that they did it in the name of what they believed to be God. On the throne of the universe they saw nothing but an angry and despotic Tyrant, who so hated heterodoxy, that He had prepared for all heretics a pandemonium

[1] George Adam Smith, *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 244.

of everlasting fire, and hence, quite honestly, they sought to deter men by torture from such an awful fate.[1]

2. We must also have *truth in ourselves.* Holy character is a kind of worship. All true life is worship: "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness"; "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Before a material God a material knee would have to bow. Before a spiritual God, nothing but the prostration of the spirit can be acceptable.

> He prayeth well, who loveth well
> Both man and bird and beast.

Love is a kind of prayer—the truest lifting up of the soul. God is a real God. The worshipper is to be a real character. The Christian must be a true man—transparent, who can bear to be looked through and through. There must be no pretence; no gilded tinsel—true gold all through.

¶ Let us take care that all our relations to God, and all our communications with Him, are honest relations, "in truth." If our body is on its knees, let us be sure that our heart is also on its knees. If we close our eyes, let us see that we close our fancies. If we say words, let us beware that they are the exact representatives of our thoughts. If we ask anything, let it be the thing we want. If we promise, let us be sure that we mean it. If we confess with our lips, let us stop, if our mind is not confessing with its inward convictions. If we praise, let us hush our soul, if it is not in tune. Let worship be worship,—a beggar knocking at the door; a sinner prostrate for mercy; a servant looking to his Master's eye; a child speaking to his Father; a pardoned man resting; a saved man thanking; a saint rejoicing.[2]

> Thy house hath gracious freedom, like the air
> Of open fields; its silence hath a speech
> Of royal welcome to the friends who reach
> Its threshold, and its upper chambers bear,
> Above their doors, such spells that, entering there,
> And laying off the dusty garments, each
> Soul whispers to herself: "'Twere like a breach
> Of reverence in a temple could I dare

[1] G. F. Terry, *The Old Theology in the New Age*, 52.
[2] James Vaughan.

Here speak untruth, here wrong my inmost thought.
Here I grow strong and pure; here I may yield,
Without shamefacedness, the little brought
From out my poorer life, and stand revealed,
And glad, and trusting, in the sweet and rare
And tender presence which hath filled this air."[1]

[1] Helen H. Jackson.

Christ's Doctrine of Election.

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CHRIST'S DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.—John vi. 37.

1. AFTER claiming to be the Bread of Life, and condemning the Jews' attitude towards Himself, Jesus announced His assurance that notwithstanding their unbelief all that the Father gave Him would come to Him, and then immediately uttered the gracious words which have given confidence and courage to all approaching Him through the centuries, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." In this twofold declaration the Lord revealed two aspects of one great effect, the heavenly and the earthly. The heavenly takes in the whole result, "*All* that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me." The earthly declares the individual responsibility, and utters the word creating confidence, "*Him* that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

2. The tone in which the words are spoken supplies another element in the picture. Jesus seems to pause after saying, "Ye have seen me, and yet believe not." It is a sorrowful fact, and it is very mysterious. Here are His own people rejecting Him, or at any rate coming to Him in such a wrong fashion that He has to discourage them. It looks as though God's plan of salvation were not working out right. Is it going to fail at the outset? Such questions must crowd into the Saviour's mind, as He faces the fact that these people will not accept Him. But they are not allowed to cloud His faith for an instant. At once the Son acquiesces in the Father's plan. It is all right; it cannot fail. "All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me." Nobody will be lost whom the Father designed to save. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." I am doing My part correctly. So all must be well.

¶ The Commander-in-Chief at the base of operations decides upon the plan of campaign, and entrusts its execution to another General who never doubts the strategy though it does not appear successful immediately, and never doubts His own perfect fulfilment of the plan.[1]

¶ Mark well this passage, "I will in no wise cast him out." Our Saviour doth plainly import that there neither is nor can be devised—no, not by God Himself—any one consideration whatsoever which might occasion Him to put off or say *nay* to any person that doth come. No consideration in the world, I say, can so aggravate a man's condition, could he make it as bad as the devils themselves, yet, if there be a coming to Christ, there can be no consideration in the highest pitch of sinfulness for Christ to reject, or put by, a person coming to Him. For you must know, beloved, Christ is well acquainted with all the objections the heart of man (nay, the devil) can object against the freeness of His grace and life by Him. To save labour, therefore, in this one passage (*I will in no wise cast out*) Christ at once answers all the objections that could be made. And I dare be bold to maintain, in the name and stead of Christ, let a person but say and lay down this for granted, that come he would—that he would have Christ rather than his life,—let this be granted for a truth, I will be bold with Christ out of this passage to answer ten thousand objections, even fully to the silencing of every objection that can be made; "I will in no wise cast him out"; *I will in no wise*, that is, I will upon no consideration that can be imagined or conceived.[2]

I.

The Father's Part.

"All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me."

At once the question suggests itself, Who are given by the Father to the Son? The context supplies an answer. The charge brought by Jesus against these Jews is, "Ye see and believe not." He has declared already, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." It seems evident, therefore, that "that which the Father giveth" includes all who believe on the Son. That may include everybody. "Whosoever will" may believe. But to believe is the essential condition.

[1] J. E. Roberts. [2] Tobias Crisp.

Therefore the great truth of our text is that all who believe are saved. It sounds a commonplace: but consider what it means. Take a few cases. A is a denizen of the slums, poor in pocket and in education; B is a University professor, of high moral instincts and intellectual attainments; C is a Roman Catholic scientist; D is a cannibal on a mission station on the Congo. Now suppose each of these convicted of sin and desiring to trust Jesus. Their circumstances vary enormously. Coming to Christ and reaching Him mean very different experiences. A never uttered a prayer in his life, and scarcely understands any article of the Christian creed; B has considered the creed carefully and critically, and has been accustomed to reverent worship; C has to accept dogmas on the authority of the Church, though his reason may contradict them; D has dim conceptions of God and is governed by savage instincts which cannot be eradicated in a brief time. Does it seem at all likely that four men placed in such different circumstances should ever succeed in finding God in Christ? Jesus says they shall. "All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me." No lack of knowledge, no spirit of caution, no church dogma, no savage instinct shall hide the face of God in Christ or keep a seeking soul from the Saviour. Coming from East and West and North and South, the guiding star shall gather them all at the feet of the Son of God.

¶ The Christian doctrine of election used to be freely preached; but it was sometimes mis-stated, and therefore it was misunderstood. So it fell into disuse. Now it seems to be too much neglected. If it means what some people think it means—that God elected a certain number of individuals without reference to their moral fitness for salvation and consigned all the rest of mankind to eternal perdition—I do not wonder it is neglected. Such teaching conflicts with our knowledge of God and has no shred of evidence in the Scriptures. Its true meaning is given in this verse. God has elected for salvation not this or that individual, but all people who believe in His Son whom He hath sent. This may be all. God wants it to be all. All who believe are saved. That is, God elects, not the individuals, but the means, and guarantees that all who use the means shall be saved.[1]

¶ As to this matter of election, I would to God that some who

[1] J. E. Roberts.

object to it had as much common sense in this matter as they have in the daily actions of ordinary life. I ask for no higher degree of common sense. Let me assume that a purse has been lost in the street adjoining our place of meeting; the purse contains a thousand guineas; whoever finds that purse may keep it. "Ha!" we say, "well, only one can find it; therefore what is the good of a thousand seeking it? Only one can have it; and if I am elected to be the man, it will come in my way." I never heard people reasoning so with regard to an affair of that kind. Though only one may have it, ten thousand will strive for it if they know the conditions. There is a prize to be given in the school. It is one prize; there are five hundred scholars in the school. The boys say, "Well, only one of us can get it, why should five hundred of us be toiling and fagging for it?" Another boy says, "I know if I am to have the prize, I will get it; so I shall read no books, and make no preparation." You would not allow a boy to reason so. Yet there are men who say this, "If we are called to heaven, we'll get to heaven; if we are elected to be saved, we need not make any effort about it." Thou wicked and slothful servant; out of thine own mouth I condemn thee; the whole action of thy evil life shall be thy answer on the day of judgment, and thou shalt be condemned to an ignominious silence because of a self-accusing conscience.[1]

¶ I am thankful to believe that my final salvation does not depend wholly on myself. If it did, it would be at stake to the very last! Salvation involves so much. It includes deliverance from sin, development of character, fitness to dwell with God. Man's faith is often such a frail thing. It were a poor refuge, if there were no Divine purpose to support it. It becomes a sure defence if God says, "I pledge that man's deliverance." Here is a man battling with a rough sea. A belt is flung to him. What hope of deliverance can he have by clinging to a few pounds of cork? This hope, that there are fifty strong arms pulling him through the surf to the shore. Do not push the simile too far. The Christian life is not simply clinging to a belt; it is a daily conflict with temptation. But it is gloriously true that faith in Christ transfers the responsibility of salvation to the Saviour, and makes deliverance certain. Though I grasp the hand of Christ I might lose it in a moment of doubt or weakness, or when my feet enter the chill waters of the river of death. Thanks be unto God for the assurance that if I clasp the hand of Christ He grips mine, and none can pluck me out of that strong clasp. It is my sheet anchor amidst the storms of life and the floods of death.[2]

[1] J. Parker. [2] J. E. Roberts.

Because I seek Thee not, oh seek Thou me!
Because my lips are dumb, oh hear the cry
I do not utter as Thou passest by,
And from my life-long bondage set me free!

Because content I perish, far from Thee,
Oh seize me, snatch me from my fate, and try
My soul in Thy consuming fire! Draw nigh
And let me, blinded, Thy salvation see.

If I were pouring at Thy feet my tears,
If I were clamouring to see Thy face,
I should not need Thee, Lord, as now I need,
Whose dumb, dead soul knows neither hopes nor fears,
Nor dreads the outer darkness of this place—
Because I seek not, pray not, give Thou heed![1]

II.

Man's Part.

"Him that cometh to me."

1. "Coming" is the only way of salvation. If there could have been any other way, this one would never have been opened. It is not conceivable that God would have given His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die upon the cross of Calvary in order to save sinners if there had been any other way of saving them that would have been as consistent with the principles of infallible justice. If men could have entered into everlasting life without passing along the path stained and consecrated by the blood of Jesus, surely that blood would never have been "shed for many for the remission of sins." The very fact that this new and living way has been opened proves that there is no other, for God would never have provided it unless it had been absolutely necessary.

2. But what is "coming"? The people He was addressing had followed Him for miles, and had found Him and were speaking to Him, but they had not "come" to Him. To come to Him is to approach Him in spirit, and with submissive trust; it is to commit ourselves to Him as our Lord; it is to rest in Him as our

[1] Louise Chandler Moulton.

all; it is to come to Him with open heart, accepting Him as He claims to be; it is to meet the eye of a present, living Christ, who knows what is in man, and to say to Him, "I am Thine, Thine most gladly, Thine for evermore."

¶ An Irish boy was asked what was meant by saving faith. "Grasping Christ with the heart," said he. The truest answer possible. And faith is only another word for coming. The man who grasps Christ with the heart, "comes."[1]

3. The one essential in coming is *the desire to come.* Christ pledges His gift to readiness of heart. As to the open eye the light pours in, and to the listening ear the music enters, so to the longing heart Christ gives the pardon and the purity and the peace which, though it has not shaped its need into those words, are in reality the gifts for which it yearns. The value of a photographic plate consists not in what it is, but in its readiness to receive the impression when the shutter of the camera is opened and the light streams in. If a mere piece of common glass were there instead of the plate, the light might shine on it for ever and no impression would be made; it is the prepared plate that receives the impression which the light conveys. So, too, it is the prepared soul that receives the gift of Christ. The one thing that the Saviour asks for is readiness, willingness, some movement of the life towards Him; if there is that within us we need not fear that Christ, who is light, will fail to bring His blessing to us or to leave His mark on us. Everything is possible to us if we are open to the influence of God. What is it that we want Christ to do for us? Is it to cleanse away our sin? He points us to His cross. Do we want rest from an accusing conscience and from the weary load of loneliness? "Come unto me," He says, "and I will give you rest." Is what is deepest in us still unsatisfied, although we have been seeking many fountains and drinking from many cups? "He that believeth on me shall never thirst."

¶ At one critical time during this period of soul-conflict he stated in one of his addresses that the question, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" was made a word of life to him. He writes: "I was very near death; I was almost despairing. The only thing that kept my head above water was the promise,

[1] R. D. Dickinson.

'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' I repeated it again and again, and prayed very earnestly, when the word came to me with such power, and with such a rebuke, 'Believe ye that I am able to do this?' He *was* able, and I believed Him, and He did it."[1]

(1) *Unfitness is no barrier to coming.*—It is strange how people are inclined to wait a little, to try to prepare themselves for Christ! They know how unlike Him they are, and how unfit they are for His presence and service; so, as a youth who waits awhile to prepare himself for some important examination, or as a soldier waits awhile to perfect himself in drill for some promotion —so they think they can wait. But their waiting never changes their nature or renews their heart. For their case is rather like that of those who suffer from a malignant disease. No amount of waiting or even of attention to the outward signs of the disease is of any avail, and the time spent over that but increases the danger; for the disorder is *within*, the whole system is poisoned and needs renewing, and it is to save their life that they at once put themselves in the hands of a qualified physician. Christ Jesus is the qualified physician, and His blood is a "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world."

¶ I have heard of a cavalier who lost his life because he stopped to curl his hair when Cromwell's soldiers were after him. Some of you may laugh at the man's foolishness; but that is all that your talk about fitness is. What is all your fitness but the curling of your hair when you are in imminent danger of losing your soul? Your fitness is nothing to Christ. Remember the hymn—

> Let not conscience make you linger,
> Nor of fitness fondly dream;
> All the fitness He requireth
> Is to feel your need of Him.[2]

(2) *Emptiness and not fulness is required.*—Before a building is erected it is necessary to excavate for a foundation, which involves the removal of much that seems important. And it is literally true that Christ wants not our fulness but our emptiness, that He may "build us up in our most holy faith." We think ourselves

[1] K. Moody-Stuart, *Brownlow North*, 41. [2] C. H. Spurgeon.

full, and are reluctant to part with anything; whereas we are "poor"—destitute of everything that is necessary to appear before God with; we are "wretched," being altogether out of harmony with the eternal joys of heaven; and we are "blind" to our actual condition, to our own welfare, and even to the salvation so freely provided and so fully revealed by Christ our Saviour, till the eyes of our understanding are opened, and we are led to see and desire the many things we need. And the faith that saves is that which takes us out of ourselves, where there is nothing, to Christ, where there is fulness for all we need—purity, peace, and joy, "without money and without price."

From all thou holdest precious, for one hour
Arise and come away,
And let the calling Voice be heard in power;
Desert thyself to-day;
If with thy Lord for once thou turn aside,
With Him thou'lt fain abide.[1]

4. The coming is *a personal coming to a personal Saviour.*—How personal the text is concerning both the one coming and the One to whom he is to come: "*him* that cometh to *me*." That is the long and the short of the whole matter, its Alpha and Omega, its beginning and its end; there must be a personal coming to the personal Christ. It will not suffice for us to come to Christ's doctrines. We must, of course, believe what He taught; but believing His teaching will not save us unless we come to Him. It will not be enough merely to come to Christ's precepts, and to try to practise them,—an utterly impossible task for our own unaided strength; we must first come to Christ, and then, when we trust in Him for salvation, His gracious Spirit will "take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto" us.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word
Rise up and follow Thee.[2]

[1] J. E. A. Brown. [2] Whittier.

III.

CHRIST'S PART.

"I will in no wise cast out."

1. *Christ's accessibility.*—"Jesus never slept in a walled town" is the striking remark of a literary writer. There never lived so open a man, so accessible always to all. Sitting at the well of Sychar, and talking freely to the first comer; receiving Nicodemus by night; listening to the Syro-Phœnician mother, who breaks through His concealment; preaching to the five thousand, who disturb His retirement,—He is the property of every man that wants Him, and leaves us an example to follow His steps.

2. *Christ's longing for response.*—"I once knew a mother," says Canon Duncan, "who had a son who suffered from paralysis of the brain. Yet, how she loved and cared for him! But the cause of her great grief was this; she said: 'I have nursed him from childhood, cleansed, fed, and clothed him, watched over him and supplied his every want, tried to please him, and to teach him little things, and now, though in years he is a man, yet he does not even know me, and shows no return of my love, but just lies there to eat and drink and sleep! And I feel that I cannot go on; I am just longing for some recognition—some response to my lifelong love and care!" How many are there, though not afflicted like that son, who nevertheless treat their God and Saviour much the same! He sacrificed His very life for them; fed, clothed, and cared for them day by day; and has called them by His providence, by His word, and by every token of love, and yet they give no response.

¶ He utters this word Himself, that, however long men may neglect it, however long it may be that they see and hear, and yet believe Him not, when they *do* finally come, He cannot, and will not, and must not cast them away.[1]

It is the greatness of Thy love, dear Lord, that we would celebrate
With sevenfold powers.
Our love at best is cold and poor, at best unseemly for Thy state,
This best of ours.

[1] Schleiermacher.

Creatures that die, we yet are such as Thine own hands
deigned to create:
We frail as flowers,
We bitter bondslaves ransomed at a price incomparably great
To grace Heaven's bowers.

Thou callest: "Come at once"—and still Thou callest us:
"Come late, tho' late"—
(The moments fly)—
"Come, every one that thirsteth, come—Come prove Me,
knocking at My gate"—
(Some souls draw nigh!)—
"Come thou who waiting seekest Me—Come thou for whom I
seek and wait"—
(Why will we die?)—
"Come and repent: come and amend: come joy the joys
unsatiate"—
—(Christ passeth by . . .)—
Lord, pass not by—I come—and I—and I. Amen.[1]

3. *The certainty of Christ's welcome.*—Every one who will come to Christ is sure of a welcome. That is the emphatic message of the text. The words used by our Lord are the strongest possible. Sweetly familiar as the music of the English version is, it scarcely represents their double emphasis. Literally they read, "Him that cometh to me I will not, *not* cast out." That is to say, to use a modern phrase, there is not the slightest fear of his being cast out. A heart burdened with a spiritual need will never be repelled; a man panting with a spiritual desire may be absolutely certain that when he comes to Christ he will be welcome. "Oh!" cries Bunyan, "the comfort that I have had from this word 'in no wise,' as who should say, by no means, for no thing, whatever he hath done. But Satan would greatly labour to pull this promise from me, telling me that Christ did not mean me. But I should answer him again—Satan, here is, in this word, no such exception, but him that comes, him, any him —'him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.'" Bunyan was right. The welcome is for all, without any reserve or any exception, or any condition, save that of willingness to come.

¶ Of other ten adults at this time admitted, one was specially noteworthy. She was about twenty-five, and the Elders objected

[1] Christina G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 164.

because her marriage had not been according to the Christian usage on Aniwa. She left us weeping deeply. I was writing late at night in the cool evening air, as was my wont in that oppressive tropical clime, and a knock was heard at my door. I called out—

"*Akai era?*" (=Who is there?)

A voice softly answered,—"Missi, it is Lamu. Oh, do speak with me!"

This was the rejected candidate, and I at once opened the door.

"Oh, Missi," she began, "I cannot sleep, I cannot eat; my soul is in pain. Am I to be shut out from Jesus? Some of those at the Lord's Table committed murder. They repented, and have been saved. My heart is very bad; yet I never did any of those crimes of Heathenism; and I know that it is my joy to try and please my Saviour Jesus. How is it that I only am to be shut out from Jesus?"

I tried all I could to guide and console her, and she listened to all very eagerly. Then she looked up at me and said—

"Missi, you and the Elders may think it right to keep me back from showing my love to Jesus at the Lord's Table; but I know here in my heart that Jesus has received me; and if I were dying now, I know that Jesus would take me to Glory and present me to the Father."

Her look and manner thrilled me. I promised to see the Elders and submit her appeal. But Lamu appeared and pled her own cause before them with convincing effect. She was baptized and admitted along with other nine. And that Communion Day will be long remembered by many souls on Aniwa.[1]

4. *The fulness and freeness of Christ's welcome.*—A man may have been guilty of an atrocious sin, too black for mention; but if he comes to Christ he shall not be cast out. To that atrocious sin he may have added many others, till the condemning list is full and long; but if he comes to Christ he shall not be cast out. He may have hardened his neck against the remonstrances of prudence, and the entreaties of mercy; he may have sinned deeply and wilfully; but if he comes to Christ he shall not be cast out. He may have made himself as black as night, as black as hell; yet, if he shall come to Christ, the Lord will not cast him out.

¶ This is the Charter of Christianity—that there lives no sinner too bad for Jesus to save. A year ago I met a doctor

[1] *John G. Paton*, ii. 282.

possessed of far more than ordinary gifts in dealing with one of our most fatal diseases. From all parts of the country men and women whose lives have been despaired of by their own physicians have journeyed to this man's consulting-room, and have placed their last hope of recovery in his mysterious powers. And he described to me the pathos of his work. For again and again he has to face a body of anxious patients who are waiting from his lips their sentence of life or of death; and, while he is able to restore many to perfect health, he knows that he will find others for whom he can do nothing. Such is the lot of every physician *but One*. There is One to whom no case is hopeless; who never yet sent patient away unhealed. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."[1]

Lord, dost Thou me invite
To sit in white
At the great Feast which for Thy friends is spread?
I could not be so bold,
In raiment poor and old;
Rather without Thy gates would stand unfed.

Thy messenger mistook
My hungry look,
As claiming seat at table of the pure;
I am too wise to dare
My worthless presence there,
Nor could my spirit that clear light endure.

Hedge-rows for me instead,
Their berries red
Enough of sweetness for my lips contain;
The glow-worm is my lamp
'Mid herbage damp;
To tread Thy bright courts would be only pain.

Yet still He calleth me—
"Come, for I wait for thee,
It is the lost and hungry that I need;
Not luxury and pride,
Already satisfied,
The humble and the poor My feast shall feed."[2]

[1] H. Bisseker, *Sunday Evenings in Methodism*, 153.
[2] J. E. A. Brown.

To Whom shall We go?

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To Whom shall We go?

Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.—John vi. 68.

1. The situation in which our Lord found Himself at this stage in His career is full of pathos. He began His ministry in Judæa, and His success there seemed to be all that could be desired. But it soon became apparent that the crowds who followed Him misunderstood or wilfully ignored His purpose. They resorted to Him chiefly, if not solely, for material advantages and political ends. He was in danger of being accounted the most skilful metropolitan physician, or in the greater danger of being courted by politicians as a likely popular leader, who might be used as a revolutionary flag or party cry. He, therefore, left Jerusalem at an early period in His ministry and betook Himself to Galilee; and now, after some months' preaching and mingling with the people, things have worked round in Galilee to precisely the same point as they had reached in Judæa. Great crowds are following Him to be healed and to be fed, while the politically inclined have at last made a distinct effort to make Him a king, to force Him into a collision with the authorities. His proper work is in danger of being lost sight of. He finds it necessary to sift the crowds who follow Him. And He does so by addressing them in terms which can be acceptable only to truly spiritual men — by plainly assuring them that He is among them, not to give them political privileges and the bread that perisheth, but the bread that endureth. They find Him to be what they would call an impracticable dreamer. They profess to go away because they cannot understand Him; but they understand Him well enough to see that He is not the person for their purposes. They seek earth, and heaven is thrust upon them. They turn away disappointed, and many walk no more with Him. The

great crowd melts away, and He is left with His original following of twelve men. His months of teaching and toil seem to have gone for nothing. It might seem doubtful if even the Twelve would be faithful—if any result of His work would remain, if any would cordially and lovingly adhere to Him. Wearily and wistfully He turns to the Twelve, asking, "Will ye also go away?" And Simon Peter answers Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

2. This answer of Peter's contains a great assumption. There is a postulate in the reply, which being removed, the whole drops to pieces. It is that man must have some one to go to. It is that the soul wants, demands, cries out for, not some thing only but some One: cannot live without a Master, without a Guide, without a Revealer and a Comforter: is so constituted that it cannot live alone, cannot grope its own way, except as searching for One who shall be its rest: will not, cannot, ought not to be self-sufficing; inasmuch as this is the law of its being, and God has made it natural to us—natural, not as a malady or weakness, but as a part of our original constitution—not to inquire whether to any one, but only, confidently, this: *To whom shall we go?* So in the text we have these three things—

I. The Fact—that we need some one to go to.
II. The Question—To whom shall we go?
III. The Answer—that only Christ can satisfy our wants, because He alone has "the words of eternal life."

I.

We need Some One to go to.

1. St. Peter grasped the situation at once. He saw that they *must* go to some one. It may be that there flashed before his eyes certain possible masters—such as Moses the lawgiver, or John the Baptist, or perhaps some of the Gentile leaders; but in the light of Jesus Christ all these seemed absolutely impossible, and so he cried, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Underlying this question, there is the same feeling which pervaded that saying of Amiel's, "Men think they can do without religion; they do not know that religion is

indestructible, and that the question simply is, Which will you have?" The only question possible for men is, "To *whom* shall we go?"

¶ There is a deep law of our nature in virtue of which men are ever haunted with a sense of need, a consciousness of dependence. In every age, in every country, this is what man has keenly felt. The instinct is irresistible, because it is set deep in the very roots of our being. There is no want more real, more imperative than this—we must have leaders whom we can follow, else nothing is done, no progress is made; there is no upward tendency, but, on the contrary, we fall back into loss and ruin. We must have our ideals, and from them alone can we draw the inspiration for better things. To put it in a well-known phrase, though one which has a heathenish smack about it, "Man must swear by his gods." "No man liveth to himself" is a text which is fertile in its significance, and which among other meanings carries this, that we all of us—the best and wisest—want a stronger and a wiser to whom we can look, who shall be our highest example, whom we can follow, reverence, obey, exalt.[1]

2. It is not a question of choice between Christ and some *thing* else, but between Christ and some *one* else. For, singularly enough, since the world was, man has never been able, amid ten thousand forms of faith, to have a religion without a personality enshrined in the very heart of it. The disciples did not ask: "What shall we take up with if we leave Jesus; what system shall we believe in?" but: "To whom shall we go?" Ask not *what* the hundreds of millions of the human race believe in to-day. If you speak of abstract things, abstract principles, they believe in ten thousand things, or they believe in nothing. But ask in *whom* they believe, and the reply will be definite enough: Christ, Mohammed, Sakyamuni, Confucius, Zoroaster! It may be questioned if to an abstract principle men have ever yet, since the world was, built one solitary temple, reared a single altar, offered a single sacrifice, or breathed a single prayer. Where there is worship the demand for a person is quite inexorable. So when the Greeks created their sun-myths and worshipped the god of day, they had first to personify it and make it Apollo, the youth with golden locks and radiant countenance.

(1) What Peter wanted—and what we want—is, first of all,

[1] G. T. Candlin, *On Service with the King*, 53.

some One who can raise us above *Circumstance*. A vast multitude of the mighty family are so placed as to be in perpetual depression. Circumstances, we say, are against them. Poverty, or its twin sister anxiety—the perpetual question of the day's or the morrow's bodily supplies—this is one case. Sickness, or its more trying and yet commoner likeness, ill-health — this is another. Disappointment—a perpetual experience, the bitterness of which is never quite lost, that the honours and distinctions of an academical or professional career are always for another, never for me—this is another depressing influence; and we might multiply them without limit. The sense of inferiority, physical or mental—the dulness of life's routine—the dreary unmarked round of duties, scarcely worth calling by so grave a name—the seeing no end, the having no prospect, the being placed where we would not be, and the hopelessness of change from it—the presence of uncongenial, unamiable, or unfriendly kinsfolk—the denial, in some definite point, of the wish of the heart, the final irreversible defeating of the life's hope—all these are common experiences. And it is a want, a primal necessity, of our being, that we should find One—for a thing it cannot be—to lift us above circumstance.

¶ When thou hast been compelled by circumstances to be disturbed in a manner, quickly return to thyself and do not continue out of tune longer than the compulsion lasts; for thou wilt have more mastery over the harmony by continually recurring to it.[1]

¶ There is more cause for joy than for complaint in the hard and disagreeable circumstances of life. Browning said, "I count life just a stuff to try the soul's strength on." Spell the word "discipline" with a final g,—"discipling." We are here to learn Time's lesson for Eternity's business. What does it signify if the circumstances about us are not of our choice, if by them we can be trained, learning the lessons of patience, fortitude, perseverance, self-denying service, acquiescence with God's will, and the hearty doing of it? Circumstances do not make character. The noblest character can emerge from the worst surroundings, and moral failures come out of the best. Just where you are, take the things of life as tools, and use them for God's glory; so you will help the kingdom come, and the Master will use the

[1] Marcus Aurelius.

things of life in cutting and polishing you so that there shall some day be seen in you a soul conformed to His likeness.[1]

(2) A second want of our nature is some personal help to lift us above *Sin*. Of all the wants of the world, none is deeper than this. No misery is greater than the consciousness that having had a tendency to love and justice, to purity and pity, to wisdom and temperance, we have become unjust, envious, full of hatred, dissolute, fond of the baseness of all the flesh, cruel, living in folly and shame, intemperate in selfish desire, tyrannized over by self; and, living with these companions, restless and unsatisfied, inwardly ashamed. Men keep their unhappy hearts to themselves, but that silent, bitter cry of unquiet shame and fear, of longing for release, for peace and goodness, rises like a vast cloud of sorrow towards heaven from the universal heart of man. Ethics do not cure that, nor science, nor philosophy, nor humanitarianism; it is an inward matter of misery. Religious discussions do not help it. It is no remedy for that to be able to balance doctrine against doctrine and to analyse by logic the schemes of the Churches. It does not cure that to be a master-critic, to apply science to the miracles, and the laws of history to the Bible. The real matter is deep within, beyond these transitory things. Knowledge, the mind of man, can do nothing to help this sorrow to a final cure.

I looked at the sky, I looked at the sea,
I thought of the stars and moon,—
And my soul went forth on the desolate slopes,
Of the wastes of endless doom:
And I knew myself for that filthy thing,
That loves the death of its soul;
For myself and my soul agreed to cling
To the things we hate and loathe:
And we seek the way and we hunt the path,
To death, and hell, and shame,
And we lightly do with a gloating laugh,
Foul deeds-without-a-name.[2]

(3) There is another universal, primal want of man's nature—and that is, some One who shall raise us above *Death* itself. The writer to the Hebrews does not say one word too much upon

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 72.
[2] Desmond Mountjoy, *The Hills of Hell*. 20.

this subject, when he declares that through fear of death all men through all their lifetime are subject to bondage. How else can we describe it? And our experience is of Christian times—of days, and of thoughts too, upon which Gospel light has shined, making it not only a figure of speech, but also something of a traditional feeling, that of course, now, death has lost its sting. Yet is not death, is not the shadow of death cast before in sickness, a terror and a tyranny still? We may forget him in health—we can lock and bar him out while we are in work and in society—but there he stands, just outside our door, now and then threatening, sometimes striking within, always in prospect, always an apprehension. May not this too be spoken of as a want, a natural want, an original want?

¶ Sir James Affleck, speaking about his visits to Dr. Alexander M'Laren as his doctor, says: "As the burden of weakness and infirmity bore down upon him, he became more silent, while touches of sombreness were now and then discernible. On one of these occasions, in speaking of death, he remarked, 'I cannot say I am more reconciled to death now than I was twenty years ago.' I replied in the words of Watts—

'But timorous mortals start and shrink,
To cross this narrow sea.'

'Ah!' he said, 'it's not only the sea, it's what is beyond the sea'; and then after a pause, 'I cannot perhaps always but sometimes I can say—

But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him.'

"It is interesting to recall that Richard Baxter, who wrote these lines, himself said as he drew near to the end of life, 'To get satisfying apprehensions of the other world is the great and grievous difficulty.'

"Dr. M'Laren's crossing of the narrow sea proved somewhat tedious, but eminently peaceful, and he is now safe with Him who 'knows all.'"[1]

(4) We need some one to go to for our *ideals*. There is a story that a certain eminent painter kept always in his studio a set of precious stones. They cost him the proceeds of many a canvas. But he said he needed them in order to refresh his

[1] *Dr. M'Laren of Manchester*, 264.

jaded sense of colour. Back to them he would often turn when he had lost the vivid sense of blue or crimson. And in their calm, unfading depths he never failed to find new tone and beauty. So we need some one to give us back the glory of lost ideals, to tone up our stale lives, to keep our hearts up to pitch. To whom can we turn for such things?

¶ It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has filled the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists.[1]

¶ In the Sermon on the Mount Christ has expressed the eternal ideal toward which it is proper for men to tend, and that degree of its attainment which can be reached even in our time.

The ideal consists in having no ill-will against any one, in calling forth no ill-will, in loving all; but the commandment, below which, in the attainment of this ideal, it is absolutely possible not to descend, consists in not offending any one with a word. And this forms the first commandment.

The ideal is complete chastity, even in thought; the commandment which points out the degree of attainment, below which, in the attainment of this ideal, it is absolutely possible not to descend, is the purity of the marital life, the abstaining from fornication. And this forms the second commandment.

The ideal is not to care for the future, to live only in the present; the commandment which points out the degree of the attainment, below which it is absolutely possible not to descend is not to swear, not to promise anything to men. And this is the third commandment.

The ideal is never, under any condition, to make use of violence; the commandment which points out the degree below which it is absolutely possible not to descend is not to repay evil with evil, but to suffer insult, to give up one's cloak. And this is the fourth commandment.

The ideal is to love our enemies, who hate us; the commandment which points out the degree of the attainment, below which it is possible not to descend, is to do no evil to our enemies, to

[1] W. E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ii. 8.

speak well of them, to make no distinction between them and our fellow-citizens.

All these commandments are indications of what we are fully able not to do on the path of striving after perfection, of what we ought to work over now, of what we must by degrees transfer into the sphere of habit, into the sphere of the unconscious. But these commandments fail to form a teaching, and do not exhaust it, and form only one of the endless steps in the approximation toward perfection.[1]

O well for him that loves the sun,
That sees the heaven-race ridden or run,
The splashing seas of sunset won,
And shouts for victory.

God made the sun to crown his head,
And when death's dart at last is sped,
At least it will not find him dead,
And pass the carrion by.

O ill for him that loves the sun;
Shall the sun stoop for anyone?
Shall the sun weep for hearts undone
Or heavy souls that pray?

Not less for us and everyone
Was that white web of splendour spun;
O well for him who loves the sun
Although the sun should slay.[2]

II.

To Whom shall We go?

Virtually, the question is, What will you substitute for the gospel of the Son of God? This is the pith of it, and it is a standing challenge to all comers and to all centuries. It is not hard to destroy, to pluck up, to pull down, to undermine by ridicule, by satire, and by sceptical objections. But when the house is down and dismantled, what next? What and how shall we build? We want a shelter, a roof overhead, a doctrine, a hope, a promise, a prospect, in view of the dark future that confronts us. Men obliterate creeds, cast miracle and prophecy

[1] Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (*Works*, xx. 104).
[2] G. K. Chesterton, *Ballad of the Sun*.

out of the world, and declare that the young, lusty Samson of modern thought will not be bound by the tattered traditions of antiquity in an age of scientific experiment. They talk about intellectual emancipation; the abolition of intellectual servitude to a set of ideas that originated with an insignificant Semitic tribe who once lived in a corner of the earth. It is easy to carp and criticize, to deal in shadowy negations; men may demonstrate the absurdity of prayer, the impossibility of miracle, the antecedent unlikelihood of the Incarnation; they may call the resurrection of Christ a myth; they may account for Isaiah, Ezekiel, and the Apocalypse and all moral inspiration upon natural principles; but meantime all this does not feed men. We need something positive, some great spiritual affirmation, a ray of hope, a word of promise, as we stand huddled, frightened, shivering on this sand-bank of finite existence. And where shall we get these?

¶ The modern man lives in a sort of supreme fear of being duped. But when this fear of self-deception goes so far as to get itself built into a sort of shrine and worshipped as Clifford worshipped it, we are at least candidates for commiseration. It is like keeping out of battle for the sake of avoiding wounds. And when all the deeper interests of the heart are the stake to be fought for! How bleak it all is! It is not easy to forget those frosted words of Clifford, written after he had cast out all his native beliefs. "I have seen the spring sun shine out of an empty heaven upon a soulless earth, and I have felt with utter loneliness that the Great Companion was dead."

1. "To whom shall we go?" Shall we cast in our lot with the *worldling*? Shall we smother our fears, our misgivings, our aspirations, our hopes, in the amusements, the interests, the pleasures of this lower world, and thus by a determined effort quench the Divine light which is in us? We cannot do this. We cannot forget the home from which we came. Ever and again, the memory of the Father whom we left intrudes itself upon us. We began our career of self-will in riotous living; and we have ended it in famine and destitution. These husks may be good enough for the swine that perish; but to us, the children of our Father, to us, the heirs of heaven, they are vile, they are loathsome, they are sickening.

¶ A large section of humanity has espoused for its creed an

abject materialism. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." What a vanity fair is modern social life! Multitudes are trying to drown their disgust in deeper cups of pleasure and riot. Men call the doctrine of Jesus "hard." "But how much harder," cries Tolstoy, "how much harder is the doctrine of the world! In my own life I can reckon up as much suffering caused by following the doctrine of the world as many martyrs have endured for the doctrine of Jesus." Yet this "doctrine of the world" is preached to human hearts as a doctrine of "good news," and crowds have turned away from the Man of Nazareth to hear it. What a travesty upon hearts, what a mockery of happiness! The modern martyrs are not in the church; they are in the world. For real martyrdom to-day, name the frenzies of contemporaneous finance. Ask the women who are racked in an inquisition worse than Torquemada's. Watch the young people training for the enjoyment of a diet of husks and sawdust. And worst of all, these crucifixions are entirely gratuitous. They give the cross without the crown or the promise of it. They yield the pang without the palm.[1]

2. "To whom shall we go?" Shall we seek counsel of the *secularist*? Shall we be content to bind our hopes and fears by the limitations of time and space? Will it suffice us to extend our scientific knowledge, to perfect our machinery, to improve our police regulations, to study our sanitary conditions, shutting our eyes meanwhile to the immensity which lies above and around us? Nay, our eternal spirit would lash itself into agony against the bars of this narrow cage. "Our immortality broods" over us "like the day," "a presence which is not to be put by."

¶ The late Mr. Winwood Reade unhappily thought and published that there was no God. His wild book he called the *Martyrdom of Man*; and without God in the world man *is* a martyr. A personal creator he asserted was an impossibility, and, to prevent any approach to hope, the existence of a soul an improbability, but not as the other, a demonstrable falsehood. These wild and whirling words were uttered by one who in his last book, issued as he died, said that he often sighed for his old belief, when to him "God was semi-human and man was half Divine, and after life death began (?) and happiness never ceased, and my mother and my Margaret would be joined to me again. Now my heart rebels against the fate of the human race, doomed to work like coral insects of the sea." This he wrote, says his

[1] G. C. Peck, *Vision and Task*, 134.

biographer, his uncle, Charles Reade, "with the hand of death upon him." We need not wonder at the mournfulness of one without hope in the world. We quote these words because the storm which lifts aside the waters shows the depths beneath. Let no man reject faith carelessly. No Christian hand could have painted more truly the want which Revelation, and that alone, supplies. The reviewer of a contemporary, with a full sympathy with Winwood Reade, quotes Schopenhauer, who, probably with like thoughts, says that, "if we take into account the pain and misery, the unhappiness and sin, with which the earth abounds, we can only wonder whether it would not have been better for us if the surface of the earth had remained like that of the moon, devoid of atmosphere, an inert mass of cinder and slag." Can our readers blame us if we put a firm foot on the old ways, and insist again and again, out of pure love for our fellows, on the reasonable expectation of the larger hope and the fuller life, the warmth and happiness given by Him who is the Light of the world, in whose light we no longer walk in darkness, and who lighteth every man that cometh into the world, unless the heart rejects His light and crawls back into the hopeless gloom?[1]

As some most pure and noble face,
Seen in the thronged and hurrying street,
Sheds o'er the world a sudden grace,
A flying odour sweet,
Then passing leaves the cheated sense
Balked with a phantom excellence.

So in our soul, the visions rise
Of that fair life we never led;
They flash a splendour past our eyes,
We start, and they are fled;
They pass and leave us with blank gaze,
Resigned to our ignoble days.[2]

3. "To whom shall we go?" Shall we close with the teaching of the *philosophical deist*? What will he give us in return for our confidence? A cold abstraction, a far-off something, a personified tendency, a hard law, a rigid and lifeless thing like the marble statues which men worshipped of old, more imposing indeed but less beautiful, a being unknown and un-

[1] J. H. Friswell, *This Wicked World*, 35.
[2] William Watson, *The Fugitive Ideal*.

knowable, whom we cannot approach, cannot realize, cannot pray to, cannot love. What consolation is there here in our sorrow? What strength is there here in our temptation? What purification is there here in our sin?

¶ Did Herbert Spencer ever convince you—did he ever convince anybody—did he ever for one mad moment convince himself—that it must be to the interest of the individual to feel a public spirit? Do you believe that, if you rule your department badly, you stand any more chance, or one-half of the chance, of being guillotined than an angler stands of being pulled into the river by a strong pike? Herbert Spencer refrained from theft for the same reason he refrained from wearing feathers in his hair, because he was an English gentleman with different tastes.[1]

4. Shall we turn to the *other religions* of the world? There is a little group of people in Liverpool who have built a mosque and profess the tenets of Mohammedanism. There are a few people in England who profess to find in Buddhism that which meets their religious craving. But would it be uncharitable to say that such persons are religious curiosities, more eager for that which is novel than for that which is true? Can we imagine any serious sober-minded Englishman deliberately choosing any religion the world has ever seen in preference to Christianity—choosing, say, Buddhism, that religion of despair which takes away God, who is the very object of religion; or Confucianism, which calls to the worship of ancestors, no more worthy of worship than our contemporaries; or Brahmanism, with its many gods rather than one; or Zoroastrianism, with evil raised almost to the level of the good?

¶ I own in full the spiritual power which there is in every attempt of heathenism after God, but though there be other religions than the Christian, surely the full notion of religion is not to be gathered out of their imperfection, but out of the more perfect faith which does what they try to do and is what they try to be. If a man asks me what a tree is, I will not send him to a stunted, frost-bitten bush high up Mount Washington, but to the oak or elm which under the best conditions has opened the tree life into fullest glory. If any one asks me what a man is, I will not show him a Kafir or a Hottentot, but the best specimen of manhood that Europe or America can bring. And yet the mountain shrub is certainly a tree, and the Hottentot is certainly

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *The Napoleon of Notting Hill.*

a man. So if anybody asks me what religion is, I will not point to Mohammedanism or to Buddhism, though they surely are religions; I will go to Christianity and in its central motive take out the real central force of all religion.[1]

5. "To whom shall we go?" Shall we turn to *self*? Shall we make ourselves our standard? Instead of having before our eyes, in our thoughts, in our ideals, in our prayers, something that all men acknowledge as superhumanly lovely and ennobling, and all Christians deem assuredly Divine, shall we look to ourselves, to our own meagre selves, with our faults and our appetites, our tastes, our pettinesses; if so we shall lack the one thing that elevates, the sympathy with the best. Soon our path curves farther and farther away; it leads to absorbing and unsatisfied hunger after lower ends; and finally a death is felt approaching to which we look forward with reluctant acquiescence and secret terror, instead of with trustful expectation as but a step in the upward path.

(1) Expediency may be a motive of good living and a means of human development. We all know how frequently it appears and what power it very often has. We are told that a good life is the best life, the safest and the happiest. "If you do what is wrong, no matter what may be the present pleasure of it, you certainly will suffer. If you do what is right, no matter how hard the struggle to which it sets you now, you certainly will prosper. Therefore, it is not well, it is not prudent, it is not expedient to be wicked." The doctrine is immensely true. Its certainty is emphasized by all that we already know of human history, and misgivings of still more terrible assertions of it stretch forward into the other world. And the doctrine certainly is lofty, inasmuch as it asserts that right and wrong are not mere whims and fashions, but essential and eternal things, that they have to do with the very structure of man and of the world, that both man and the world are built so that the wrong finds its punishment and the right its reward. And certainly it is a doctrine which does to a very great extent control the actions of mankind. Some people will even call it religion. Some people will make religion to be nothing but a great system of expediency stretching out into the world beyond the grave. But clearly this

[1] Phillips Brooks, *New Starts in Life*, 323.

is not religion. The religious man says, "This is right, and I will do it because God wants me to and I love Him for the great love wherewith He has loved me." The prudent man says, "This is right, and I will do it because it will be best for me." The first is religious and the second is not religious, only prudent.

¶ If a man merely holds that on the whole it is better and wiser to abstain from the sins of the flesh, but that there is no Divine command against them, depend upon it, occasions will arise when passion will be so strong that the mere notion of what is better will not stand for an instant before its storm. If a man merely considers that it is on the whole wiser to speak the truth, but that no Divine message has ever declared that all liars shall have their portion in the banishment of the wicked from the presence of the Lord, depend upon it that occasions will come to him when concealment, evasion, and duplicity will be irresistibly attractive. Where there is no belief in a Divine revelation, there can be no sense of sin.[1]

(2) There is another power which men attempt to substitute for religion as the ruler and inspirer of life. It is that feeling which is in the heart of almost every man, the sense of self-respect which makes him say, "It is beneath my dignity to do a mean or wicked action." Poor indeed is the man who does not know what that feeling is. You offer a man a temptation to steal. He turns away and will not steal because he is loyal to his master, God. That is religion. He draws back and will not steal because he knows that "Honour is the best policy." That is expediency. He turns indignantly upon you and says, "Do you take me for a thief?" That is honour. What this great instinct of honour has done, it is hard to over-value. It has been the overruling power of whole sections of society, almost of whole periods of history. It has shone with splendid lustre in the eyes of many men, till it seemed to them all that humanity needed for its full consummation. It has had its martyrs who have given up their lives under its inspiration. It is romantic. It is the power of chivalry. There is hardly an age of history so dark that it may not be found burning there. It is a strong and, as it seems to many people, a sufficient power here to-day. There are many who would substitute the principle of honour for the principle of religion, many who think that the self-respect of the

[1] W. M. Sinclair, *A Young Man's Life*, 183.

gentleman is enough without the loving consecration of the servant of God. But what is this honour that shines so splendidly? Is it conscience quickened and filled with pride? Its very principle of life is pride. It is a man's supreme consciousness of his own value, so strong that he recognizes the obligations which rest upon one so valuable as he is. His nobility obliges him. The deficiencies of it seem to be premised in this very definition, and they show out all through the history of its influence on men.

¶ We believe that we have an immortal future, and are destined hereafter to an eternal weight of glory, not of enjoyment—for that is a mere libel—but of perfection and enlargement of all our noblest faculties. We believe that we can even here become partakers of the Divine nature. We believe that we have dwelling in us by faith and communion with the Most High, the very Spirit of God Himself, weaning us from the world, setting our affections on things above, purifying our thoughts, putting into our minds good desires, and daily bringing the same to true effect, strengthening our resolves, subduing our passions, and making us fit for the companionship of all that is best and most esteemed in humanity, in the pure and tranquil radiance of the regions of light, yes, and of the fellowship of God Himself the Father and the Son. Then I ask what moral scheme or persuasive ideal could be devised by the wit of man which would go anywhere near to produce in us such reason for that truest self-respect which is a humble and grateful union with God Himself?[1]

III.

None but Christ can Satisfy.

1. Men have offered to us many phantoms of religion. Many societies, each with its theory to bind human creatures together in worship and love, have knocked at our door to tell us the truth of life. Materialism has sought our suffrages, and humanitarianism. Ethics and science have offered us their dishes and said: "Eat and be satisfied." Vague optimisms and mud-rooted pessimisms; a religion of humanity and a religion of unchristian theism have filled our ears with their cries; but when we have found the more excellent, we are not likely to descend to the less. We wish them all good fortune so far as they minister to love.

[1] W. M. Sinclair, *A Young Man's Life*, 185.

But when we are asked for the foundation of life, we turn to Jesus and say: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

¶ There are too many witnesses in His favour for us to leave Him. Call the roll of philosophers: Bacon, Locke, Johnson, Edwards, Hopkins, McCosh. They were Christians, and it was Locke who said, "If I had my life to live over, I would spend it studying the Epistles of Paul and the Psalms." Call the roll of astronomers: Copernicus, Kepler, Sir Isaac Newton. They were Christians, and it was Kepler who said, "I am thinking the thoughts of God. I am overawed with the sense of His majesty. In the firmament God is passing before me in the grandeur of His way." Call the roll of scientists: Agassiz, Miller, Proctor, Guizot. They were Christians. Then add the name of John George Romanes, who was an unbeliever, but became a devoted Christian, accepting the divinity of Jesus and the atonement of Christ, and died a triumphant death. The greatest historians, among whom were Bancroft and Green, were Christians. The greatest discoverers, among whom were Raleigh, Livingstone, and Stanley, were Christians. The greatest statesmen, among whom were Constantine, Charlemagne, Alfred the Great, Webster, Gladstone, and Bismarck, were Christians.[1]

(1) "*Thou* hast the words of eternal life." St. Peter was convinced not only that Jesus had the words of eternal life, but that no one else had. "To whom shall we go?" St. Peter had not an exhaustive knowledge of all sources of human wisdom; but speaking from his own experience he affirmed his conviction that it was useless to seek life eternal anywhere else than in Jesus. And it seems equally hopeless still to look to any other quarter for sufficient teaching, for words that are "spirit and life." Where but in Christ do we find a God we can accept as God? Where but in Him do we find that which can not only encourage men striving after virtue, but also reclaim the vicious? To put any one alongside of Christ as a revealer of God, as a pattern of virtue, as a Saviour of men, is absurd. There is that in Him which we recognize as not merely superior, but of another kind; so that those who reject Him, or set Him on a level with other teachers, have first of all to reject the chief part of what His contemporaries were struck with and reported, and to fashion a Christ of their own.

[1] J. W. Chapman.

¶ No student of history doubts for a moment that Jesus Christ appeals to man as does no other character in human history. His appeal is not only to the whole man, that is, to the entire range of his faculties; in a remarkable way, He appeals to the whole of humanity. Mohammed appeals to the Arab, the Turk, the fierce and fatalistic nomad of the East. Buddha appeals to the reflective mind of the Orient. Jesus Christ's appeal is uniquely cosmopolitan. He holds the sceptre of the Western world, and yet a learned Hindu has said, "None but Jesus deserves, and none but He shall have, the diadem of India."[1]

(2) "Thou hast *the words* of eternal life." St. Peter's confession expressed the grounds on which he believed Jesus to be what He said, and our faith has the same proof to rest on. It does not rest on St. Peter's certainty, but on the reason here stated, common to all who receive the evidence. The grounds of Christian faith in the Divine person of Jesus are His works, His words, and His character; what He did, what He said, and what He was. But prominence is here given to the "words." For the "words" were at that time in some danger of being disparaged in favour of the "deeds." An incident had just happened which implied that, and St. Peter here puts in, so to speak, his protest against the multitude. "It is not for the loaves or for the miracles we either believe or follow Thee: it is because Thou hast the words of eternal life."

¶ The "words" are precisely that part of the evidence which is now just as valid for us as it was for St. Peter. The "words" are here, just as fresh and full of life and spiritually mighty as when they were first spoken. And what is still more to the point, the "words" interpret and explain all the rest. The relation of the miracles and the character of Jesus to His words may be stated as the relation of a seal or stamp to a document. It is the document—the writing—that defines and explains the authority conveyed by the seal.[2]

(3) "Thou hast the words of *eternal life*." That expression "eternal life" must have been very familiar to St. Peter and all the twelve, while Jesus went in and out among them. There were few days when they did not hear it fall from His lips, and they caught it up if they did not fully understand it. In the

[1] C. C. Albertson, *College Sermons*, 45.

[2] J. Laidlaw, *Studies in the Parables*, 339.

brief record of our Lord's teaching, contained in the four Gospels, we have it twenty-five times. In St. John's Gospel alone it occurs seventeen times. In this very chapter we read it five times over. No doubt it was ringing in St. Peter's ears when he spoke. Christ's words of eternal life were words about the nature of that life which He came into the world to proclaim,—a life begun in the soul by faith while we live, and perfected in glory when we die. They were words about the way in which this eternal life is provided for sinful man, even the way of His atoning death, as our Substitute, on the Cross. They were words about the terms on which this eternal life is made our own, if we feel our need of it, even the terms of simple faith. As Latimer said, it is but "believe and have." They were words about the training and discipline on the way to eternal life, which are so much needed by man and so richly provided, even the renewing and sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost. They were words about the comforts and encouragements by the way, even Christ's daily help, sympathy, and watchful care.

¶ Christ is the source of spiritual life to all who believe in His name. The idea of Divine personality carries with it the idea of revelation, as all our modern discussions show. If the power that is behind the world is a personal power—a character or moral will, and not a mere blind force issuing endlessly into space, it cannot, in its very nature, but make itself known to man. And so the Word of God, God in Christ, becomes the essential correlative of the idea of God. If, in other words, there is an eternal life, a moral sphere beyond the present, of which the present is only a faint reflection, this can be known to us only through its expressions in such an one as Christ. That others have a spiritual life like ours we know only through communion with them in word or act. That there is a spiritual life, transcending the world and embracing an eternal life, on which the world and humanity rest, and out of which all good that is in the world or man comes, we can know only through its coming near to us in word or act. This is what the Apostles felt Christ had done for them. He had not merely spoken to them of an eternal life. He had not said, "It is a part of My teaching that there is such a life." The Pharisees might have said this But all He said or did was the revelation of this life. They felt themselves, in contact with Him, to be at the same time in contact with a sphere of spiritual being above the world. And so the assurance of the eternal life can only come to any of us straight out of the words

of Christ rather than out of any other source. The word of Christ is the highest evidence for us that there is any higher life at all, any ground of existence that is really eternal beneath all the changes of experience. If we cannot rest here, or get conviction here, as we look at Christ, we cannot rest anywhere, or touch the eternal as by faintest contact. In Him, in communion with His spirit, in all that He had ever said to them, the Apostles felt themselves assured of a higher being. They felt the outflow of the eternal life bathing their souls and suffusing them with its own deep serenity. This was why they could not go away with others. Where else could they turn? "Thou, O Christ, art the only true light of our souls. Thou hast the words of eternal life."[1]

2. What did Jesus purpose to do? We see what He is doing among men, but the question is, What did He purpose to do? Some men go all through life without a purpose. But most of us form a purpose before we have passed far into the years of youth. With one, it is to make a fortune, with another to win fame, with others, to carve, or paint, or write, or fight, or build, or heal, or plough. Now what did Jesus conceive His life's task to be? Our wonder increases when we learn that He seriously purposed to found a kingdom, to destroy the works of evil, to institute the reign of love among men and among nations, to redeem society by bringing back to goodness and to God all the individuals of which society is composed. Did any other ever undertake a task like that? Compared with it, the emancipation of a race of slaves, or even the founding of a new nation, is a small thing. Go a little further into His life and we find He purposed and professed to solve the three greatest and gravest problems of life—the problems of sin, and sorrow, and death. Now look at His philosophy, His theology, His metaphysics, His ethics, His system, whatever it may be called, His Gospel, let us say, and you will see, potentially if not actually, the materials out of which all this is to be done. There is love, pure and sacrificial, upon which to found a kingdom in the hearts of men, love as the basis of a new brotherhood; there is grace abounding much more than ever sin abounded; inward strength and comfort for the heart with sorrow laden; and there is immortality with which to face the fearful phantasm of death. All these elements

[1] J. Tulloch, *Sundays at Balmoral*, 94.

are in His Gospel, and they must impress us with their absolute adequacy.

¶ Surprise at first, and afterwards a sense of adequacy, are awakened by a study of the fact of Christ. Then follows in our minds the tribute we instinctively pay to greatness, to simplicity, and power. A good part of the admiration we have for Abraham Lincoln is based upon our perception of his native nobility, his elemental simplicity. He was so free from anything like artificial greatness, from the counterfeit semblance of dignity, and yet so masterful, so completely captain of his soul, and of the Ship of State he guided through the seething sea of war. It is easy to admire a man of our own flesh and blood, so near us that there are those still living who have touched his hand. It is not so easy to admire a personality separated from us by sixty generations. Yet admiration is a feeble word to measure the response in our hearts when we hear the name of Mary's Son. He seems not so far away, after all. We read the Gospels and rise with a kind of feeling that if we have not seen Him, we have at least heard His footfall on the temple's marble pavement or the street, that we have caught some accent of His voice, or touched the hem of His passing garments. Whittier puts it so—

> But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
> A present help is He;
> And faith has still its Olivet,
> And love its Galilee.
>
> The healing of His seamless dress
> Is by our beds of pain;
> We touch Him in life's throng and press,
> And we are whole again.[1]

(1) When we know that we love God and that God loves us, we are *healed of the grievous wounds of life.* In the infinite flood of Divine and human love our sins and sorrows are drowned, and the ark of joy and peace alone survives. To have the heart full of love, and to feel that we are infinitely loved, is so Divine a passion that it lifts us into a world where we forget our pain and wrong. We feel our pains and sins, but even when we feel them—and many are our days of depression—we feel them only for a time. We know they will come to an end, and all the arguments based on them against the goodness and love of God

[1] C. C. Albertson, *College Sermons*, 48.

drift away like feeble clouds before the summer wind. The soul is at peace, though life be shipwrecked in the storm. We know, though we have been battered by sin, that through love of Love we are becoming righteous. We know, though sorrows are deep, that out of hunger for righteousness we are attaining joy. We understand, though we are left as lonely often as a mountain peak, that we are not alone, for the Father is with us. This is the first truth as it is in Jesus.

Lord, weary of a painful way,
All night our heads we would not lay
Under the naked sky;
But ask who worthiest? who will best
Entreat a tired and lowly guest
With promptest courtesy?

And Thou art worthiest; there will not
One loving usage be forgot
By Thee; Thy kiss will greet
Us entering; Thou wilt not disdain
To wash away each guilty stain
From off our soilëd feet.

We enter, from this time to prove
Thy hospitality and love
Shown tow'rd Thy meanest guest:
From house to house we would not stray,
For whither should we go away?
With Thee is perfect rest.[1]

(2) The second declaration Christ made followed on the first. It was the declaration of the *forgiveness of sins*. The removal of the natural results of wrong-doing, of what we call punishment, is not forgiveness. Forgiveness is to feel at one with love, with our Father's heart; to feel like a child to God; to feel the strange delight that we are in union with God and His righteousness, and to do what the feeling urges; to feel the emotion of joy urging us to the act of good. Yes, that is the forgiveness of sins. A new life is open to us. We hear the voice of Jesus: "Go, you will sin no more." For nearly twenty centuries, the words, the character, the life, the teaching, and the death of Jesus,

[1] Trench, *Poems*, 145.

all they were, and all they mean, have brought healing to this universal misery of man. There are millions of lives to testify to the truth of this. The lost have found themselves; the sinners have ceased to sin, the miserable have become happy; the restless have reached peace; the dissolute have become pure; the malicious and envious have learned to love; the selfish have devoted themselves to others; the poor of soul have become rich, the useless useful, the fearful brave, and the enslaved free. Where the secret lies we cannot altogether know, but we shall know hereafter. What we do know is the facts; the result of the words of Christ. Men are redeemed; and beneath every form of Christianity that is the permanent thing. The dogmas do not count, the criticism, the discussions are nothing: the healing power, the forgiveness of sins—that is all. It is the power within to lead a new life and to forget the burden of the past—a mighty thing indeed! And the reason of it all is contained in those words of Jesus, if we could but reach their infinite depth in thought: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much." That was the second declaration of Jesus, and it followed from His doctrine of a Father of men who, being good, loved them, and could not, consistently with fatherhood, leave His children to be mastered by evil. He was bound to make them, in the end, holy with Himself.

¶ Wife murder was also considered quite legitimate. In one of our inland villages dwelt a young couple, happy in every respect except that they had no children. The man, being a Heathen, resolved to take home another wife, a widow with two children. This was naturally opposed by his young wife. And, without the slightest warning, while she sat plaiting a basket, he discharged a ball into her from his loaded musket. It crashed through her arm and lodged in her side. Everything was done that was in my power to save her life; but on the tenth day tetanus came on, and she soon after passed away. The man appeared very attentive to her all the time; but, being a Heathen, he insisted that she had no right to oppose his wishes! He was not in any way punished or disrespected by the people of his village, but went out and in amongst them as usual, and took home the other woman as his wife a few weeks thereafter. His second wife began to attend Church and School regularly with her children; and at last he also came along with them, changing very manifestly from his sullen and savage former self. They have a large family; they

are avowedly trying to train them all for the Lord Jesus; and they take their places meekly at the Lord's Table.

It would give a wonderful shock, I suppose, to many namby-pamby Christians, to whom the title "Mighty to Save" conveys no ideas of reality, to be told that nine or ten converted murderers were partaking with them the Holy Communion of Jesus! But the Lord who reads the heart, and weighs every motive and circumstance, has perhaps much more reason to be shocked by the presence of some of themselves. Penitence opens all the Heart of God—"To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."[1]

(3) But Christ's words infer a third truth—the *immortality of the soul*, of the conscious personality of the child of God. The Father is immortal, therefore the child. Goodness and love —two names of the same thing—are necessarily eternal. If the child is to reach the goodness and love of the Father, he must be as eternal as the Father. If all this trouble be taken with the individual child, it is ridiculous to the reason, and inconceivable to the heart, that the Father should fling that which He laboured for and loved into annihilation. If we allow that God is a Father that conclusion of death is unthinkable.

¶ We then went for a three miles' walk, my father talking of the *Passion Play* at Ober-Ammergau, of religion, of faith, and of immortality. While touching on the life after death he spoke of Carlyle, and his dimness of faith in the closing years of his life. He said that when he was stopping at a coffee-house in London, Carlyle had come to smoke a pipe with him in the evening and the talk turned upon the immortality of the soul; upon which Carlyle said: "Eh! old Jewish rags: you must clear your mind of all that. Why should we expect a hereafter? Your traveller comes to an inn, and he takes his bed, it's only for one night, he leaves next day, and another man takes his place and sleeps in the bed that he has vacated." My father continued: "I answered, 'Your traveller comes to his inn, and lies down in his bed, and leaves the inn in the morning, and goes on his way rejoicing, with the sure and certain hope and belief that he is going somewhere, where he will sleep the next night,' and then Edward Fitzgerald, who was present, said, 'You have him there'": "which proves," said my father, "how dangerous an illustration is."[2]

¶ Dr. M'Laren of Manchester gave an address at the "Union Assembly" in Edinburgh on the 9th of October 1901. His biographer says: There was one passage in particular, towards the

[1] *John G. Paton*, ii. 160.

[2] *Tennyson: A Memoir*, ii. 410.

end of the address, when his radiant look told even more than his words. It ran as follows:—

"Consider how the conscious possession of that higher life in Christ brings with it an absolute incapacity of believing that what men call death can affect it. 'Christ in us' *is* 'the hope of glory.' The true evidence for immortality lies in the deep experience of the Christian spirit. It is when a man can say, 'Thou art the strength of my heart' that the conviction springs up inevitable and triumphant, that such a union can no more be severed by the physical accident of death than a spirit can be wounded by a sword, and that, therefore, he has the right to say further, 'and my portion *for ever*.'"

In the short pause that came after these words, and during the rustle of movement (preparation for another spell of sustained attention) one listener turned to another and whispered, "It is like seeing a spirit." And it was true.[1]

3. This, then, is the teaching of Christ in relation to the individual soul. But if that were all, more than half of our deepest interests would be left out. More than half of human life would be unappealed to. The expansion of the soul in love would not only be unsecured, it would even be injured. If that were the whole of religion, it might end in fixing our thoughts only on ourselves, and so end, through engendering selfishness, in the death of religion. Men have made this personal religion all; but that was not the way of Christ. He secured a personal religion by bringing each of us into the closest contact with our Father, but He swept us far beyond that individual relation. His whole life and His death maintained that we were to pass beyond ourselves into union with mankind, and that only in sacrifice of self for those not ourselves could we win our true life. He that loveth his life shall lose it, he that loseth his life the same shall find it. Die for men; die for the truths that bless and redeem men; die for the love of your brethren, if you would live. Death of self for love's sake is life eternal.

> Not cloistered saints, that bid the world
> Remember they forget—its lure defy,
> Whose abnegating robes accost the glance
> Of lost humanity;

[1] *Dr. McLaren of Manchester*, 189.

Not they whose moving lips attest
  Repeated prayer, to shame the throng or mart,
Whose fingers outward clasp a crucifix;
  Not they who stand apart—
Are Thy swift followers alone,
  Sweet Christ! Unveiled, untonsured, they there be
Who hold their mired brothers to their heart,
  Even for love of Thee,
Who didst remember to the end
  Thy world, though they had Thee forgot and fled—
A hillside Calvary Thy holy lot,
  Mountain and sea Thy bed.[1]

[1] Martha Gilbert Dickinson.

The Will to Know.

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THE WILL TO KNOW.

If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself.—John vii. 17.

1. THE Feast of Tabernacles was in progress in Jerusalem when Jesus entered the Temple to teach. A circle of Jews were gathered round Him, who seem to have been spellbound with the extraordinary wisdom of His words. He made no pretension to be a scholar. He was no graduate of the Rabbinical schools. He had no access to the sacred literature of the people. Yet here was this stranger from Nazareth confounding the wisest heads in Jerusalem, and unfolding with calm and effortless skill such truths as even these Temple walls had never heard before. Then "the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" What organ of spiritual knowledge can He have, never having learned? Never having learned—they did not know that Christ had learned. They did not know the school at Nazareth whose Teacher was in heaven—whose school-room was a carpenter's shop—the lesson, the Father's will. They knew not that hidden truths could come from God, or wisdom from above. What came to them was gathered from human books, or caught from human lips. They knew no organ save the mind; no instrument of knowing the things of heaven but that by which they learned in the schools. But Jesus points to a spiritual world which lay still far beyond, and tells them of the spiritual eye which reads its profounder secrets and reveals the mysteries of God. "My doctrine is not mine," He says, "but his that sent me"; and "my judgment is just," as He taught before, "because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." And then, lest men should think this great experience was never meant for them, He applies His principles to every human mind which seeks to know God's will. "If any

man will do his will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God."

2. "If any man willeth to do . . . he shall know." The quality of our perceptions is to be determined by the character of our wills. If we look after our moral wills our spiritual eyes will attend to themselves. Our visions wait upon our volitions. Moral obedience is the secret of spiritual discernment. "If any man willeth to do"; that is the first step in the exploration of eternal truth; that is the "open sesame" into the region of light and glory. "If any man willeth to do," that is the instrument; "he shall know," that is the consequent revelation. "If any man willeth to do"; that is the telescope through which we survey the far-stretching panorama of Gospel truth, or it is the microscope through which we discern the mind of God in the immediate problem. "He shall know!" The first part of the text proclaims the means, the second enshrines the issues.

¶ Doing and knowing are blood relations. "Obedience is the organ of spiritual vision"—so Robertson re-issued the truth, that, if we would know God's doctrine, we must do His will. Experiment and experience spring from the same root, and will not grow apart. Do you wish you had a Christian's experience? *Will* to make the Christian experiment. Will you know who Christ is, and what He can do for you? Obey Him; do as He directs. Do not expect experience without experiment. "Follow me" was Christ's way of saying "Taste and see that the Lord is good: Blessed is the man that trusteth in him."[1]

I.

Obeying.

"*If any man willeth to do his will*, he shall know." Here we have the means by which knowledge of truth is attainable. There are a number of instruments for finding out the will of God. One of them is a very great instrument, so far surpassing all the rest in accuracy that there may be said to be but one which has never been known to fail. The others are smaller and clumsier, much less delicate, indeed, and often fail. They often fail to come within sight of the will of God at all, and are so far astray at other times as to mistake some other thing for it. Still they are

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 38.

instruments and, notwithstanding their defects, have a value by themselves; and when the great instrument employs their humbler powers to second its attempts, they immediately become as keen and as unerring as itself.

The most important of these minor instruments is *Reason*; and although it is a minor instrument, it is great enough in many a case to reveal the secret will of God. God is taking our life and character through a certain process, for example. He is running our career along a certain chain of events. And sometimes the light which He is showing us stops, and we have to pick our way for a few steps by the dimmer lights of thought. But it is God's will for us then to use this thought, and to elevate it through regions of consecration, into faith, and to walk by this light till the clearer beam from His will comes back again. Another of these instruments is *Experience*. There are many paths in life which we all tread more than once. God's light was by us when we walked them first, and lit a beacon here and there along the way. But the next time He sent our feet along that path He knew the sidelights would be burning still, and let us walk alone. And then there is *Circumstance*. God closes things in around us till our alternatives are all reduced to one. That one, if we must act, is probably the will of God just then. And then there are the *Advice* of others—an important element at least—and the *Welfare* of others, and the *Example* to others, and the many other facts and principles that make up the moral man, which, if not strong enough always to discover what God's will is, are not too feeble often to determine what it is not.

Even the best of these instruments, however, has but little power in its own hands. The ultimate appeal is always to the one great Instrument, which uses them in turn as it requires, and which supplements their discoveries, or even supplants them, if it choose, by its own superior light, and might, and right. It is like some great glass that can sweep the skies in the darkest night and trace the motions of the farthest stars, while all the rest can but see a faint uncertain light piercing for a moment here and there the clouds which lie between. And this great instrument for finding out God's will, this instrument which can penetrate where reason cannot go, where observation has not been before, and memory is helpless, and the guiding hand of circumstance has

failed, has a name which is seldom associated with any end so great, a name which every child may understand, even as the stupendous instrument itself with all its mighty powers is sometimes moved by infant hands when others have tried in vain. The name of the instrument is *Obedience*. Obedience, as it is sometimes expressed, is the organ of spiritual knowledge. As the eye is the organ of physical sight; the mind, of intellectual sight; so the organ of spiritual vision is this strange power, Obedience. This is one of the great discoveries the Bible has made to the world. It is purely a Bible thought. Philosophy never conceived a truth so simple and yet so sublime. And, although it was known in Old Testament times, and expressed in Old Testament books, it was reserved for Jesus Christ to make the full discovery to the world, and add to His teaching another of the profoundest truths that have come from heaven to earth—that the mysteries of the Father's will are hid in this word "obey."

¶ Men say that when they know they will do; Jesus says that when they do they will know. He does not promise to manifest Himself to the man who dreams or debates, but to him who keeps his commandments. The seeds of truth sprout in the soil of obedience. The words of Jesus in the mind of a disobedient man are no more vital than wheat in the wrappings of a mummy. To know the Divinity of Jesus's teachings, we must do His will with definite intention. Moral disobedience is mental darkness, but to submit our wills in loyalty to His law is to open our minds to the light of His truth.[1]

1. "If any man."—Observe the universality of the law. "If *any* man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself." The law was true of the Man Christ Jesus Himself. He tells us it is true of all other men. In God's universe there are no favourites of heaven who may transgress the laws of the universe with impunity—none who can take fire in the hand and not be burnt—no enemies of heaven who if they sow corn will reap tares. The law is just and true to all: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." In God's spiritual universe there are no favourites of heaven who can attain knowledge and spiritual wisdom apart from obedience. There are none reprobate by an

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 19.

eternal decree, who can surrender self and in all things submit to God, and yet fail of spiritual convictions. It is not therefore a rare, partial condescension of God, arbitrary and causeless, which gives knowledge of the truth to some, and shuts it out from others; but a vast, universal, glorious law. The light lighteth every man that cometh into the world. "If *any* man willeth to do his will, he shall know."

¶ Of all the insolent, all the foolish persuasions that by any chance could enter and hold your empty little heart, this is the proudest and foolishest,—that you have been so much the darling of the Heavens, and favourite of the Fates, as to be born in the very nick of time, and in the punctual place, when and where pure Divine truth had been sifted from the errors of the Nations; and that your papa had been providentially disposed to buy a house in the convenient neighbourhood of the steeple under which that Immaculate and final verity would be beautifully proclaimed. Do not think it, child; it is not so. This, on the contrary, is the fact,—unpleasant you may think it; pleasant, it seems to *me*,—that you, with all your pretty dresses, and dainty looks, and kindly thoughts, and saintly aspirations, are not one whit more thought of or loved by the great Maker and Master than any poor little red, black, or blue savage, running wild in the pestilent woods, or naked on the hot sands of the earth; and that, of the two, you probably know less about God than she does; the only difference being that she thinks little of Him that is right, and you much that is wrong.[1]

2. "Willeth to do."—The old version reads: "If any man will do his will, he shall know," but the Revised Version takes us a step farther back, away to the preparatory conditions before any deed is yet accomplished. "If any man *willeth* to do . . . he shall know!" Back from doing to willingness to do. We are led from the realm of conduct to the region of character, from finished deed to primary aspirations. Notice the difference this makes in the problem. Before, it looked as if the doing were to come first and then the knowing His will; but now another element is thrown in at the very beginning. The being willing comes first and then the knowing; and thereafter the doing may follow—the doing, that is to say, if the will has been sufficiently clear to proceed. The whole stress of the passage therefore turns

[1] Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (*Works*, xviii. 36).

on this word "willeth." And Christ's answer to the question, How shall we know the will of God? may be simply stated thus: "If any man is willing to do God's will, he shall know," or, in plainer language still, "If any man is sincerely trying to do God's will, he shall know." The connection of all this with obedience is just that being willing is the highest form of obedience. It is the spirit and essence of obedience. There is an obedience in the world which is no obedience, because the act of obedience is there but the spirit of submission is not.

¶ On John viii. 43, 44: "Ye cannot hear my word; and the lusts of your father ye will do," Brownlow North remarks, "The '*will*' explains the 'cannot.' You cannot, because your will is in opposition."[1]

¶ "A certain man," we read in the Bible, "had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father?" Obedience here comes out in its true colours as a thing in the will. And if any man have an obeying will, a truly single and submissive will, he shall know of the teaching, or of the leading, whether it be of God.[2]

3. "His will."—If there is one thing more than another which is more personal to the Christian, more singularly his than God's love or God's interest—one thing which is a finer symbol of God's love and interest, it is the knowledge of God's will—the private knowledge of God's will. And this is more personal, just inasmuch as it is more private. My private portion of God's love is only a private *share* in God's love—only a part—the same in quality and kind as all the rest of God's love, which all the others get from God. But God's will is a thing for myself. There is a will of God for me which is willed for no one else besides. It is not a share in the universal will, in the same sense as I have a share in the universal love. It is a particular will for me, different from the will He has for any one else—a private will—a will which no one else knows about, which no one can know about, but me.

(1) God has a life-plan for every human life. In the eternal

[1] K. Moody-Stuart, *Brownlow North*, 265.
[2] H. Drummond, *The Ideal Life*, 309.

counsels of His will, when He arranged the destiny of every star, and every sand-grain and grass-blade, and each of those tiny insects which live but for an hour, the Creator had a thought for each of us. Our life was to be the slow unfolding of this thought, as the corn-stalk from the grain of corn, or the flower from the gradually opening bud. It was a thought of what we were to be, of what we might become, of what He would have us do with our days and years, our influence and our lives. But we all had the terrible power to evade this thought, and shape our lives from another thought, from another will, if we chose. The bud could only become a flower, and the star revolve in the orbit God had fixed. But it was man's prerogative to choose his path, his duty to choose it in God. But the Divine right to choose at all has always seemed more to him than his duty to choose in God, so, for the most part, he has taken his life from God, and cut out his career for himself.

(2) It has happened, therefore, that the very fact of God's guidance in the individual life has been denied. It is said to give life an importance quite foreign to the Divine intention in making man. One life, it is argued, is of no more importance than any other life, and to talk of special providences happening every hour of every day is to detract from the majesty and dignity of God; in fact, it reduces a religious life to a mere religious caprice, and the thought that God's will is being done to a hallucination of the mind. But the Christian cannot allow the question to be put off with poor evasions like these. Every day, indeed, and many times a day, the question arises in a hundred practical forms. What is the will of God for me? What is the will of God for me to-day, just now, for the next step, for this arrangement and for that, and this amusement, and this projected work for Christ? For all these he feels he must consult the will of God; and that God has a will for him in all such things, and that it must be possible somehow to know what that will is, is not only a matter of hope, but a point in his doctrine and creed.

4. How may we assure ourselves that this willingness to do God's will is ours?

(1) We may judge our primary bias by our treatment of the light which we have already received. Our inclinations are

reflected in our ways; our inclinations are the moulds in which our deeds are shaped. What, then, have our deeds to say about our inclinations? What have we done with the light which has already been given? For God has nowhere and at no time left Himself without a witness. In no man's life, however imprisoned and bewildered, is there ever a heaven without a twinkle of guiding light. On the darkening wastes of every life, with all its moors and fens and torrents, there is a kindly gleam. Many things are hidden, but all things are not obscure. Some things are clear, and what have we done with them? We are praying for larger days, and there is a little glow-lamp at our feet; what have we done with that? Are we asking for stars and at the same time despising candles? Are we waiting for light upon unknown continents, and disdaining the proffered lamp that would guide us down the street? We are, perhaps, waiting for the sun to rise upon the dark and awful mysteries of the Atonement, while in our immediate presence there shines the light of a vivid and neglected duty. The text makes one thing plain, and we shall do infinitely well to heed it—that sunrises are not for those who neglect candles, and that we need never expect to enter into the illumined recesses of sacred truth if the condemnatory light of despised lamps is shining in our rear. "If any man willeth to do his will, *he* shall know," and we are pathetically and tragically foolish if we are seeking the knowledge by any other road. The way to firm, fine perception, and therefore to the rich unfolding of truth and glory, is not through metaphysics, or by the towering aspirations of philosophic Babels, but by the humble commonplace road of reverent moral obedience.

¶ An earnest but pessimistic priest was talking to the Bishop about the state of his parish, and was specially troubled by the small success of his efforts to help the younger farm-lads lodging at the various homesteads. "For example, my Lord," he said, "there is one lad with whom I had taken much trouble, and I hoped an influence for good was getting a lodgment in the boy's heart. But, imagine my distress when I asked what he had done in the way of preparation for his early Communion at Easter, and all he said was, 'I's cleaned my boots, and put 'em under the bed.' It is sad, indeed!"—"Well, dear friend," replied the Bishop, "and don't you think the angels would rejoice to see them there?"[1]

[1] G. W. E. Russell, *Edward King, Bishop of Lincoln*, 114.

(2) Many of us are putting second things first. We are seeking to know the mind of the Lord, to disengage His truth, when all the time we are rebels to the truth we know. Now a neglected duty always pollutes the air like a neglected lamp; it contributes smoke when it was purposed to contribute light, and the very minister of illumination makes the atmosphere more dense and opaque. In our quest for God and truth we must, therefore, see to it that there are no smoking lamps, and we do this when we firmly set ourselves to do the will we know. There are whole continents of spiritual truth lying back in twilight and night, but there is a fringe of revelation in the foreground, glimpses of our Lord's will which leave us in no manner of doubt. Let us begin with the will we know, and through it move on to the unknown. But, when I say "the will we know," I mean all the will we know. We are not to choose a candle here and a candle there, and reject and ignore the rest. We must not pick and choose among the lamps. If we are seeking the land of the morning, we must not despise a single candle which gives its kindly guidance by the way. Wherever we find a clear revelation of our Master's will it is through scrupulous obedience to that will that we must seek the unveiling of the truth that still remains hid.

¶ Obey *something*; and you will have a chance some day of finding out what is best to obey.[1]

¶ As long as we set up our own will and our own wisdom against God's, we make that wall between us and His love which I have spoken of just now. But as soon as we lay ourselves entirely at His feet, we have enough light given us to guide our own steps; as the foot-soldier who hears nothing of the councils that determine the course of the great battle he is in, hears plainly enough the word of command which he must himself obey.[2]

(3) If a man is willing to do the will of God, he will be watchful against the prejudices and prepossessions which would hinder him from knowing that will. He will know the danger which always exists of self-deception, and of confounding strong conviction with sound and solid persuasion. Some men have strong convictions, but they believe a lie, a lie for which, if need be,

[1] Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera.* [2] Mr. Tryan, in *Scenes of Clerical Life.*

they are prepared to give up their life. Let us never forget that the firmness with which we hold any principle is no proof of its truthfulness, unless we have verified it in practice. The man whom Christ contemplates is one to whom all light is welcome, come from what quarter it may. It may disturb old convictions; it may reveal that as true which before seemed to be false; it may alter the proportions and relations of truths, giving a primary position to some which once held but a secondary, and, on the contrary, reducing to a lower status what once was highest of all. But it is the *will of God* he is bent on knowing and doing, and this is more than a recompense for all the disturbance which may befall merely inherited opinions. He will feel that there is no interest, either in this world or in any other, compared with that of finding out and fulfilling the will of God. This must be right, this must be best.

¶ The difficulty of gaining admission for any truth into the minds of men whose lives are in disconformity with it is proverbial. If a man's interests, his present or even his fancied interests, or his pleasures are involved in his continuance in any course of action, we know what a mass of evidence is required to convince him that he is in the wrong. To the makers and sellers of silver shrines there will be no goddess like Diana of the Ephesians. If a craft, however iniquitous, be in danger, we need not be sanguine in our hopes of convincing of its wickedness those who are enriching themselves by its gains. We may be prepared with much evidence of its wrongfulness, but they have profits which overwhelm all our demonstrations. Hence it is that the opinions of men are quite as frequently the product of their practices as their cause; and the doctrine, while it gives its complexion to the life, as certainly takes its complexion from it. Thieves do not first excogitate evil maxims, and then begin to steal; they first begin to steal, and then adopt evil maxims; and as a rule, the worse the man, the worse must be the principles from which he acts; and the better the man, the nobler the principles which animate him.[1]

¶ When the Cliffords tell us how sinful it is to be Christians on such "insufficient evidence," insufficiency is really the last thing they have in mind. For them the evidence is absolutely sufficient, only it makes the other way. They believe so completely in an antichristian order of the universe that there is no living option: Christianity is a dead hypothesis from the start.[2]

[1] E. Mellor, *The Footsteps of Heroes*, 239. [2] W. James, *The Will to Believe*, 14.

II.

KNOWING.

"If any man willeth to do his will, *he shall know.*" Here we have the issue of obedience. This willingness to do His will, whether I find the clear revelation in the sacred word or in the private oratory of my own conscience, gives to my life the requisite atmosphere in which all spiritual truth is to be discerned. To be willing to do His will, and to do it, gathers into the life a certain air of refinement which is the only congenial medium for the discovery of spiritual truth. Everybody has noticed how clearly sounds travel when there is snow on the ground. When that white vesture clothes the earth soft sounds become articulate and doubtful callings become clear. And when, by scrupulous obedience to the will of the Saviour, the heart grows pure, when it is clothed in habits of consecration which dim even the whiteness of the virgin snow, then do the doubtful utterances of our Lord become articulate, and suggestions of remote and hidden truth speak clearly in our receptive ears. "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching."

1. "He shall know."—If we hear our conscience and set our face to duty, it will be with us as with the traveller who ascends the Gemmi Pass. When he comes to the foot of the precipice along whose ledges and through whose crevices the narrow path ascends, the mist may be lying heavy, and at first he may not find the starting-point. Once his feet are upon the path, although he cannot see beyond a few yards and has no idea how the path may wind, it is only a matter of dogged and careful perseverance. With every step the mist grows more luminous, glimpses of the crest can now and again be caught, and suddenly the traveller comes out from the cloud into the clear sunlight on the height, with the spotless snow around him and the blue of God's heaven over his head. He that wills to do God's will shall come to know God's will before set of sun.

¶ I have known men who have for long doubted the existence of God and denied that we could know anything of Him, resolutely set themselves to be true and pure and unselfish, and the changed attitude has begotten a yearning for and a trust in a truth and righteousness and goodness out of and beyond themselves. The

conviction that they must dwell in a personal source has gradually grown within their aspiring spirits; and they have come to feel sure that it is a Personal Will that is at the centre of our complicated, perplexed, and mysterious life, always going out in work and always unexhausted—a Will and not a cold, hard, material "power-not-of-ourselves"; the Personal Will of a living and loving Father. In seeking to do the *best*, they have, like Zaccheus, come on the track of Him who is the Absolute Best embodied and made attractive to all men for the salvation of the world.[1]

(1) "He shall *know*."—There is a wide distinction between supposing and knowing—between fancy and conviction—between opinion and belief. Whatever rests on authority remains only supposition. We have an opinion when we know what others think. We *know* when we feel. In matters practical we know only so far as we can do. Feel God; do His will, till the Absolute Imperative within you speaks as with a living voice: Thou shalt, and thou shalt not; and then you do not think, you *know*, that there is a God. That is a conviction and a belief.

¶ Faith in Christ is an act rather of the spiritual nature than of the intellect, and as the result of sympathy with the truth rather than of critical examination of evidence. A painter or art-critic familiar with the productions of great artists feels himself insulted if you offer him evidence to convince him of the genuineness of a work of art over and above the evidence which it carries in itself, and which to him is the most convincing of all. If one of the lost books of Tacitus were recovered, scholars would not judge it by any account that might be given of its preservation and discovery, but would say, Let us see it and read it, and we will very soon tell you whether it is genuine or not. When the man you have seen every day for years, and whose character you have looked into under the strongest lights, is accused of dishonesty, and damaging evidence is brought against him, does it seriously disturb your confidence in him? Not at all. No evidence can countervail the knowledge gained by intercourse. You *know* the man, directly, and you believe in him without regard to what other persons advance in his favour or against him. Christ expects acceptance on similar grounds.[2]

I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea;
Yet know I how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be.

[1] J. Clifford, *The Dawn of Manhood*, 95. [2] Marcus Dods.

I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven;
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given.[1]

(2) Let us remember, however, that the knowledge promised by Christ may become ours only gradually. Our experience may be like that of a man waiting for the dawn, rather than that of a man who is suddenly plunged out of darkness into the full blaze of the midday sun. The light grows upon us; and whilst, at first, we may see distinctly only one or another thing that lies nearest to us, after awhile other things rise into view, till at last whatever is within range becomes clearly visible. In relation to Divine truth we often find an impatience which would be counted very foolish in relation to natural truth. Men who are content to grope on very slowly in science, getting a glimpse now of one truth and then of another, expect in the region with which we are here concerned to pass almost at once into full light and certainty. This cannot be. Moral loyalty, earnest and well-directed labour and humble patience, are necessary conditions of entering into full possession of the secret of the Lord.

¶ I think I cannot be mistaken here. Could you know *how* I have lived in His mind, and tried to understand Him, till comprehension became adoration, you would think so. I am not pretending to a superior appreciation beyond yours—except only on this ground, that, professionally forced to the contemplation, and forced more terribly by doubts and difficulties that nearly shattered morals and life, till I was left alone with myself and Him, I am, perhaps, qualified to speak with a decision that would be otherwise dogmatism.[2]

2. "He shall know of the *teaching*."—We ought to fix in our minds what exactly Jesus intended by His words when He spoke of knowing the teaching and doing the will. He did not mean that we must be acquainted with the various dogmas which scientific religion has from time to time created and into whose mould the fluid idea concerning spiritual truth has been run. Dogmas are the achievement of the intellect, and the Pharisees were exceedingly strong in their dogmatic knowledge. When Jesus spoke of teaching He referred to the burden of His own

[1] Emily Dickinson.

[2] *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 407.

teaching, and the sum of all His teaching was God. His aim was to impress the mind with a certain idea of God, and it was a moral rather than an intellectual conception. We do not find Jesus enlarging upon the existence and attributes of God after the manner, say, of the Athanasian Creed. He said nothing about the being of God, but He endeavoured to convince men that God was the merciful and faithful Father of the human race; that He loved men, both good and bad, with a patient fatherly love; that He desired His children to abandon their sins and come home to His fellowship; that He was ready to receive them if they would only trust and obey Him. This was not theology, it was religion. It was not God's being but God's doing that Jesus preached, not His nature but His character. He desired not that men should solve problems about God, but that they should have fellowship with Him.

¶ I cannot but think that the brethren sometimes err in measuring the Divine love by the sinner's knowledge.[1]

3. "Whether it be of God."—The earnest purpose to do the will of God operates upon the heart of man, and leads him to the knowledge of the teaching, whether it be of God. Who can set himself to the higher life without there coming upon his soul a sense of contrast between such life and that which he has hitherto led? There is something enlightening in the very entertainment of a true purpose. It gives notice to all the unworthy passions of the heart that a conflict is at hand. The birth of this heavenly resolution is not unmingled pleasure. It cannot be. For there is a past which comes up with its records of sin and guilt, and the man feels that that past is *his*, and cannot be treated as if it had never been. He cannot wipe it from his memory, nor can he silence the accusations of conscience. Does not the soul feel that the teaching *is of God*, whatever may be the mysteries which envelop it—that it is of God, because it addresses itself to the awakened conscience—that it is of God, because it does not sweep justice away that it may find room for mercy, but blends the claims of both in the sovereign and the fatherly dispensation which saves the sinner, while it condemns his sins?

[1] Dinah Morris, in *Adam Bede*.

¶ I asked myself what my life was, and received as an answer: "An evil and an absurdity." And indeed, my life—that life of pampered appetites and whims—was meaningless and evil, and so the answer, "Life is evil and meaningless," had reference only to my life, and not to human life in general. I comprehended the truth, which I later found in the gospel, that men had come to love the darkness more than the light because their deeds were bad, for those who did bad deeds hated the light and did not go to it, lest their deeds be disclosed. I saw that in order to comprehend the meaning of life it was necessary, first of all, that life should not be meaningless and evil, and then only was reason needed for the understanding of it. I comprehended why I had so long walked round such a manifest truth, and that if I were to think and speak of the life of humanity, I ought to think and speak of the life of humanity, and not of the life of a few parasites of life. This truth had always been a truth, just as two times two was four, but I had not recognized it because, if I recognized that two times two was four, I should have had to recognize that I was not good, whereas it was more important and obligatory for me to feel myself good than to feel that two times two was four. I came to love good people and to hate myself, and I recognized the truth. Now everything became clear to me.[1]

4. What wonderful light the words of our Lord cast on the true channel through which spiritual knowledge enters man, and how they rebuke the pride and arrogance of that reason which presumes to have the power to master all things. Reason has its sphere assigned to it by its Maker, and within that sphere it is "a vision and a faculty Divine"; but there are realms in which it plays, and was designed to play, a subordinate part, and in which its discovering power is very small. Even apart from religion, how many departments of truth there are in which reason is but an incompetent authority. How many men of the highest intellectual powers are shut out of the beauties created by the genius of the artist, the poet, the painter, the sculptor, and the musician. Their reason is blind and deaf before forms and sounds of the most transcendent loveliness. Many a mathematician, peerless in his power of calculation, stands in blank and unsympathetic mood before the loveliest forms that ever breathed on the canvas; and many a logician, whom no sophistry

[1] Tolstoy, *My Confession* (*Complete Works*, xiii. 62).

could elude, hears nothing but a succession of incoherent and confused noises in some marvellous creation of music which enthrals the appreciative soul. And yet the truth of art is as true as that of such matters as are within the province of reason itself, and can no more be justly discarded or despised by the merely intellectual philosopher than the radiant glories of the external universe can be denied by the man who is blind. So also, but in still higher degree, religion has its truths, which, though not contrary to reason, lie beyond its power to discover or, it may be, for the present, to harmonize. Shall reason, shut out of so many realms of truth even in the natural world, claim a sovereignty over the world in which infinite love and infinite wisdom are displaying their resources to redeem man from sin? Reason by itself has almost as little to do with the deeper experiences of the soul as affection has to do with the questions of arithmetic or the problems of geometry; for these deeper experiences are those of repentance, remorse, faith, hope, temptation, and struggle and heavenward aspiration. Love is ever the key to the deepest mysteries. Though shut to the scrutiny of the keenest reason, they open to the knocking of an affectionate and reverent heart. Hidden from those who regard themselves as the wise and prudent, they are revealed unto babes. They that seek to do the will of God shall indeed be taught of Him.

If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice "believe no more"
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answer'd "I have felt."[1]

¶ I've seen pretty clear ever since I was a young un, as religion's something else besides notions. It isn't notions sets people doing the right thing—it's feelings. It's the same with the notions in religion as it is with math'matics,—a man may be able to work problems straight off in's head as he sits by the fire and smokes his pipe; but if he has to make a machine or

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*.

a building, he must have a will and a resolution, and love something else better than his own ease.[1]

5. There are two types of men to whom Jesus' words ought to be a warning.

(1) The first is the man who supposes that he knows the doctrine, but is not doing the will. Is he sure that he knows anything which counts when his knowledge is so absolutely divorced from life? He has a very strong theory about the inspiration of the Bible, but what good is his devotion to the letter when the spirit of the Book has not affected his heart? He believes that he knows God, but how can he?—for God is love, and this man is not loving his brother. He is very keen about the Deity of Christ, but what right has he to speak of Christ since he will not carry Christ's cross in mercy and humility? He is convinced that his sins are forgiven, and prates about assurance, but can they be loosed if he will not give quittance to his brother man? He has an unfaltering confidence that he will reach heaven when he dies, but what place can he have in heaven who to-day is carrying a hell of unclean or malignant passions in his heart?

(2) The other is the man who is proud of his scepticism, and complains that he cannot know, while all the time he is refusing to obey. Granted that the Holy Trinity and the sacrifice of Christ are mysteries, and that God Himself is the chief mystery of all, he ought to remember that everything in life is not a mystery. It is open to us all to do our daily work with a single mind, to be patient amid the reverses of life, to be thoughtful in the discharge of our family duties, and to be self-denying in the management of our souls. Duty at any rate is no mystery, and it is grotesque that a man should proclaim that he cannot believe the most profound truths when he is making no honest effort to keep the plainest commandments.

¶ "I wish I had your creed, then I would live your life," said a seeker after truth to Pascal, the great French thinker. "Live my life, and you will soon have my creed," was the swift reply. The solution of all difficulties of faith lies in Pascal's answer, which is after all but a variant of Christ's greater saying, "He that willeth to do the will of God, shall know the teaching."

[1] Adam Bede, in *Adam Bede*.

Is not the whole reason why, for so many of us, the religion of Christ which we profess has so little in it to content us, simply this, that we have never heartily and honestly tried to practise it?[1]

Therefore be strong, be strong,
Ye that remain, nor fruitlessly revolve,
Darkling, the riddles which ye cannot solve,
But do the works that unto you belong;
Believing that for every mystery,
For all the death, the darkness, and the curse
Of this dim universe,
Needs a solution full of love must be:
And that the way whereby ye may attain
Nearest to this, is not through broodings vain
And half-rebellious, questionings of God,
But by a patient seeking to fulfil
The purpose of His everlasting will,
Treading the path which lowly men have trod.
Since it is ever they who are too proud
For this, that are the foremost and most loud
To judge His hidden judgments, these are still
The most perplexed and lost at His mysterious will.[2]

6. Jesus' word has great comfort for two kinds of people.

(1) The first is the man who is harassed by many perplexing questions, but who is doing his duty bravely. Courage, we say, and patience. No one ever carried Christ's Cross without coming near to Christ Himself, and where Christ is, the light is sure to break. There is no sacrifice we make, no service we render, that is not bringing us nearer to the heart of things; for the heart of the universe is love. Let us watch as those who watch for the morning, and watch at our work, for the day will break and it will come with morning songs. St. Thomas could hardly believe anything, but he was willing to die with Christ, and Christ showed him His wounds.

¶ With anxious thoughts at this time General Booth avers, when the rubicon was passed and the severance from the Methodist New Connexion made final, "That he and his wife went out together not knowing a soul who would give them a shilling, neither knowing where to go." Mrs. Booth wrote to her parents, "I am so nervous I can scarcely write. I am almost bewildered with fatigue and anxiety. If I thought it was right to stop here in the ordinary work I would gladly consent. But I cannot be-

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Empire of Love*, 101. [2] Trench, *Poems*, 102.

lieve that it would be so. Why should he spend another year plodding round this wreck of a circuit, preaching to twenty, thirty, and forty people, when, with the same amount of cost to himself, he might be preaching to thousands? And none of our friends would think it right if we had an income. Then, I ask, does the securing of our bread and cheese make that right which would otherwise be wrong when God has promised to feed and clothe us? I think not; William hesitates. He thinks of me and the children, and I appreciate his love and care. But I tell him that God will provide if he will only go straight on in the path of duty. It is strange that I, who always used to shrink from the sacrifice, should be the first in making it."[1]

I slept, and dreamed that life was Beauty;
I woke, and found that life was Duty.
Was thy dream then a shadowy lie?
Toil on, sad heart, courageously,
And thou shalt find thy dream to be
A noonday light and truth to thee.[2]

(2) The other is the man who laments the simplicity of his intellect. Be of good cheer, and do not despair or despise yourself. The Master thanked God that He had hidden the deep things from the wise and had revealed them to babes; He also set a child in the midst of the disciples and told them that if any one desired to be great he must become as a little child. It is not through deep thinking, but through faithful doing, that one comes to know the mystery of God; and faithful doing is within every one's reach. The path which philosophers and scientists have often missed has been found by shepherds on the hills, and by working women. Mary of Bethany and the fishermen of Galilee knew more of God than the scholars of Jerusalem.

¶ One hears sometimes of religious controversies running very high; about faith, works, grace, prevenient grace, the Arches Court and *Essays and Reviews*;—into none of which do I enter, or concern myself with your entering. One thing I will remind you of, That the essence and outcome of all religions, creeds and liturgies whatsoever is, To do one's work in a faithful manner. Unhappy caitiff, what to you is the use of orthodoxy, if with every stroke of your hammer you are breaking all the Ten Commandments,—operating upon Devil's-dust, and, with constant invocation of the Devil, endeavouring to reap where you have not sown?[3]

[1] *The Life Story of General Booth*, 55.
[2] Ellen S. Hooper.
[3] Carlyle, *Miscellaneous Essays*, vii. 229.

Living Water.

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LIVING WATER.

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.—John vii. 37.

1. THE occasion and date of this great saying are carefully given by the Evangelist, because they throw much light on its significance and importance. It was "on the last day, the great day of the feast," that "Jesus stood and cried." The Feast was that of Tabernacles, which was instituted in order to keep in mind the incidents of the desert wandering. The peculiar greatness of the eighth day lay in the fact that it was the close of the whole festival and was kept as a Sabbath (Lev. xxiii. 36). It has been conjectured that it was observed in memory of the entrance into Canaan. At present it is treated as a separate Festival.

Part of the ceremonial was that on each morning of the seven, a procession of white-robed priests wound down the rocky footpath from the Temple to Siloam, and there in a golden vase drew water from the spring, chanting, as they ascended and re-entered the Temple gates, where they poured out the water as a libation, the words of the prophet, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." It is uncertain whether the libations were made on the eighth day. If they were not, the significant cessation of the striking rite on this one day of the feast would give a still more fitting occasion for the words of the text.

2. The true worshippers among these Israelites had been seeing a spiritual meaning in the water, and had been conscious of an uneasy feeling of thirst still in the midst of these Temple services, an uneasy questioning whether even yet Israel had passed the thirsty desert, and had received the full gift God had meant to give. There were thinking men and thirsty souls then as there are now; and to these, who stood perhaps a little aside,

and looked half in compassion, half in envy, at the merry-making of the rest, it seemed a significant fact that, in the Temple itself, with all its grandeur and skilful appliances, there was yet no living fountain to quench the thirst of men—a significant fact that to find water the priest had to go outside the gorgeous Temple to the modest "waters of Siloah that go softly." All through the feast these men wondered morning by morning when the words of Joel were to come true, when it should come to pass that a fountain should "come forth of the house of the Lord," or when that great and deep river should begin to flow which Ezekiel saw in vision issuing from the threshold of the Lord's house, and waxing deeper and wider as it flowed. And now once more the last day of the feast had come; the water was no longer drawn, and yet no fountain had burst up in the Temple itself; their souls were yet perplexed, unsatisfied, craving, athirst, when suddenly, as if in answer to their half-formed thoughts and longings, a clear, assured, authoritative voice passed through their ear to their inmost soul: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

3. Strange words to say anywhere, daring words to say in the Temple court! For there they could mean nothing less than Christ's laying His hand on that old miracle, which was pointed to by the rite, when the rock yielded the water, and asserting that all which it did and typified was repeated, fulfilled, and transcended in Himself, and that not for a handful of nomads in the wilderness, but for all the world, in all its generations. So here is one more occasion on which, in this Gospel, we find Christ claiming to be the fulfilment of incidents and events in that ancient covenant,—Jacob's ladder, the brazen serpent, the manna, and now the rock that yielded the water. He says of them all that they are the shadow, and the substance is in Him. Let us consider, as they are set forth in the text, these three things—

I. Christ's View of Humanity.
II. Christ's View of Himself.
III. Christ's Invitation to Humanity.

I.

CHRIST'S VIEW OF HUMANITY.

1. "If any man *thirst.*"—Christ confronts man's deepest need. He sees humanity "thirsting." No metaphor could be more intense in a dry and thirsty land like Palestine. It fittingly pictures the deepest want of the human soul.

(1) It is characteristic of the teaching of Christ that He always speaks of man's chief spiritual needs in the terms of his greatest physical necessities. The words by which He describes the need of the soul for God are such words as "hunger" and "thirst." We all know what it is to have physical thirst. Toiling under the hot sun, trudging along the dusty road—the painful sensation is familiar enough to us. But more real and intense would be the figure to an Eastern. Ask him who has crossed the desert, "What is thirst?" and he will tell you of the bones of men and beasts all bleached and white that mark its highway. Smitten with thirst on its burning sands, what will a man not give for water? The fine sand entering into every pore of his skin, choking and blinding him, the scorching wind drying up the very marrow of his bones, his tongue cleaving to his mouth, his eyes bloodshot, the desert reels around him, and he is willing to fill the cup with pearls in exchange for a cupful of water. Water is always an attractive word in the East. But at the time when Jesus uttered this saying it would have an effect that was almost magical. It was in the autumn weather, when the sun had been shining in fierceness for months, and the barren ground was crying out for rain.

(2) We need not go over all the dominant desires that surge up in men's souls, the mind craving for knowledge, the heart calling out for love, the whole nature feeling blindly and often desperately after something external to itself, which it can grasp, and in which it can feel satisfied. We all know them. Like some plant growing in a cellar, and with feeble and blanched tendrils feeling towards the light which is so far away, every man carries about within himself a whole host of longing desires, which need to find something round which they may twine, and in which they can be at rest.

(3) The misery of man is great upon him, because, having these desires, he misreads so many of them, and stifles, ignores, atrophies to so large an extent the noblest of them. There is no sadder tragedy than the way in which we misinterpret the meaning of these inarticulate cries that rise from the depths of our hearts, and misunderstand what it is that we are groping after, when we put out empty, and, alas! too often unclean, hands, to lay hold on our true good. We do not know what we want, many of us, and there is something pathetic in the endless effort to fill up the heart by a multitude of diverse and small things, when all the while the deepest meaning of aspirations, yearnings, longings, unrest, discontent, is, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God."

¶ "Isaac Williams," wrote Mr. Copeland, "mentioned to me a remark made on Hurrell Froude by S. Wilberforce in his early days: 'They talk of Froude's fun, but somehow I cannot be in a room with him alone for ten minutes without feeling so intensely melancholy, that I do not know what to do with myself. At Brighstone, in my Eden days, he was with me, and I was overwhelmed with the deep sense which possessed him of yearning which nothing could satisfy and of the unsatisfying nature of all things.'"[1]

Its warping winds swept thro' my soul:
  Its fires scorched all my arc of life:
Of joy it gave a trivial dole—
  Then brought me anguish, shame and strife:

An hour of pulsing feverish joy,
  Framed in a flame of blazing red;
Then, rotting in its own rank soil,
  The swift-born flower lay swiftly dead.[2]

2. "If any man thirst."—Christ speaks as if that thirst was by no means universal, and, alas! it is not. "*If* any man thirst"; there are some of us that do not, for we are all so constituted that, unless we use continual self-discipline, and self-suppression, and self-evolution, the lower desires will overgrow the loftier ones, and kill them, as weeds kill the precious crop. And some of us are so much taken up with gratifying the lowest necessities

[1] Dean Church, *The Oxford Movement*, 55.
[2] Desmond Mountjoy, *The Hills of Hell*, 15.

and longings of our nature, that we leave the highest all uncared for, and the effect of that is that the unsatisfied longing avenges itself, for our neglect of it, by infusing unrest and dissatisfaction into what else would satisfy the lowest. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver, nor he that loveth abundance with increase," but he that loves God will be satisfied with less than silver, and will continue satisfied when decrease comes. If we would suck the last drop of sweetness out of the luscious purple grapes that grow on earth, we must have the appetite for the best things, recognized, and ministered to, and satisfied. And when we are satisfied with God, we shall have learnt in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be self-sufficing.

¶ The late Sir James Stephen in a lecture to young men once said that he could put his suggestions in one word—Aspire. That was very good advice. But what should the aspiration be?[1]

¶ On the morning of January 7, 1900, Bishop Creighton, a few days before he died, seemed particularly well. His chaplain, Mr. Percival, was with him for a long while, and they spoke of various answers which had been given to the question, What is the greatest danger of the coming century? The Bishop said, "I have no doubt what is the greatest danger—it is the absence of high aspirations."[2]

¶ The first, and last, and closest trial question to any living creature is, "What do you like?" Tell me what you like, and I'll tell you what you are. Go out into the street, and ask the first man or woman you meet, what their "taste" is; and if they answer candidly, you know them, body and soul. "You, my friend in the rags, with the unsteady gait, what do *you* like?" "A pipe, and a quartern of gin." I know you. "You, good woman, with the quick step and tidy bonnet, what do you like?" "A swept hearth, and a clean tea-table; and my husband opposite me, and a baby at my breast." Good, I know you also. "You, little girl with the golden hair and the soft eyes, what do you like?" "My canary, and a run among the wood hyacinths." "You, little boy with the dirty hands, and the low forehead, what do you like?" "A shy at the sparrows, and a game at pitch farthing." Good; we know them all now. What more need we ask?[3]

3. It is only the thirsty whom Jesus Christ invites to come to

[1] Lord Avebury, *Peace and Happiness*, 77.

[2] *The Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, ii. 463.

[3] Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive* (*Works*, xviii. 434).

Him as the source from which they can draw spirit and life. Those who have eaten and drunk to the full must become thirsty before they can understand, and certainly before they can take to heart, what it means when a man who has trod this earth bears witness to a whole people, and lastly to all mankind: "I am the inexhaustible well from which all man's longing after life and spirit may be satisfied."

¶ I know not any pleasure of sense more exquisite than a draught of cool, clear water, when you are thirsty; but few things are more insipid than water when there is no thirst. It is thus that Christ and His salvation are very sweet to one, and very tasteless to another.[1]

O Lord, the most Fair, the most tender,
My heart is adrift and alone;
My heart is a-weary and thirsty,
Athirst for a joy unknown.
From a child I followed it, chased it,
By wilderness, wold, and hill;
I never have reached it or seen it,
Yet must I follow it still.

In those olden years did I seek it,
In the sweet, fair things around;
But the more I sought and I thirsted,
The less, O my Lord, I found.
When nearest it seemed to my grasping,
It fled like a wandering thought;
I never have known what it is, Lord,
Too well know I what it is not.

"It is I, it is I, the Eternal,
Who chose thee Mine own to be—
Who chose thee before the ages,
Who chose thee eternally.
I stood in the way before thee,
In the ways thou wouldest have gone;
For this is the mark of My chosen,
That they shall be Mine alone."

[1] W. Arnot, *The Anchor of the Soul*, 31.

II.

Christ's View of Himself.

"If any man thirst, let him come unto *me*." Christ claims to satisfy man's deepest need. The claim is a tremendous one. Other teachers have counselled a course of action or a mode of life. This Teacher claims to be Himself the source of good and the fountain of life. Truly never man spake like this Man.

1. The people's thirst shall be quenched, if they will but come to Him: this is the first and obvious meaning of His words. That they had some thirst for spiritual blessing their very presence in Jerusalem proved; for, however mingled may have been their desires, however worldly in many respects their thoughts of the Kingdom of God, yet they did desire God and God's Kingdom; and if the religious hopes of the nation could have been obliterated, their one distinguishing characteristic would have been gone. But they are seeking to satisfy their souls in ways that do not, that cannot, succeed. God's true presence is lost in the very abundance and show of the paraphernalia and ceremony of worship, and the life of God is dried up in them by the endless elaboration of their minute and barren rules of living. The truth of their holy religion does little more for their actual satisfaction than the sweet, living water of Siloam did for the golden vessel that it filled; and it does no more through them for others than the water poured from such vessel on to the altar, and wasted, as it streamed and trickled away. Let the people come to Him, and God Himself shall live in them.

2. All the cravings after a settled and eternal state, all the longings for purity and fellowship with the Highest, which the Temple services rather quickened than satisfied, Christ says He will satisfy. The Temple service had been to them as a screen on which the shadows of things spiritual were thrown; but they longed to see the realities face to face, to have God revealed, to know the very truth of things, and set foot on eternal verity. This thirst is felt by all men whose whole nature is alive, whose experience has shaken them out of easy contentment with material prosperity; they thirst for a life which does not so

upbraid and mock them as their own life does; they thirst to be able to live, so that the one-half of their life shall not be condemned by the other half; they thirst to be once for all in the "ampler ether" of happy and energetic existence, not looking through the bars and fumbling at the lock. This thirst and all legitimate cravings which we feel, Christ boldly and explicitly promises to satisfy; nay more, all illegitimate cravings, all foolish discontent, all vicious dissatisfaction with life, all morbid thirst that is rapidly becoming chronic disease in us, all weak and false views of life, He will rid us of, and give us entrance into the life that God lives and imparts—into pure, healthy, hopeful life.

¶ It is on record that a visitor once ventured to ask Alfred Tennyson what he thought of our Saviour. They were walking in a garden. The poet was silent for a moment. Then he stopped by a beautiful flower, and pointing to it said: "What the sun is to that flower, Jesus Christ is to my soul."[1]

¶ Christ claims to be able to meet every aspiration, every spiritual want, every true desire in this complex nature of ours. He claims to be able to do this for one, and therefore for all. He claims to be able to do it for all the generations of mankind, right away down to the end. Who is He that thus plants Himself in the front of the race, knows their deep thirsts, takes account of the impotence of anything created to satisfy them, assumes the Divine prerogative, and says, "I come to satisfy every desire in every soul, to the end of time"?[2]

3. He claims to be separate altogether from those whose thirst He would satisfy. It is a claim which only Divinity can warrant Him in making, or can fulfil when it is made. And from that day when He stood in the Temple and cried these words, down to this day, there have been, and there are, millions who can say, "We have drawn water from this fountain of salvation, and it has never failed us." Christ's audacious presentation of Himself to the world as adequate to fill all its needs, and slake all its thirst, has been verified by nineteen centuries of experience, and there are many men and women all over the world to-day who would be ready to set to their seals that Christ is true, and that He, indeed, is all-sufficient for the soul.

¶ Jesus Christ threw a totally new light upon the personality of man. He took love as His point of departure, the central

[1] Arthur W. Robinson, *The Voice of Joy and Health*, 49. [2] A. Maclaren.

principle in our nature, which gathers all its other faculties and functions into one; our absolutely fundamental and universal characteristic. He taught us that virtues and graces are thorough only when they flow from love; and further, that love alone can reconcile the opposite phases of our life—action and passion, doing and suffering, energy and pain,—since love inevitably leads to sacrifice, and sacrifice is perfect love. It may be granted that previous teachers had said somewhat kindred things. But Jesus Christ carried His precepts home by practice, as none had ever done before. He lived and died the life and death of love; and men saw, as they had never seen, what human nature meant. Here at last was its true ideal, and its true ideal realized.[1]

III.

Christ's Invitation to Humanity.

1. "Jesus *stood and cried.*" The phrase used is singularly vivid: Jesus was standing, watching, it might be, the procession of the people from their booths to the Temple, and then, moved by some occasion, *He cried.* As Jesus stood and cried to the people, He was conscious of power to impart to them a freshly welling spring of life—a life that would overflow for the strengthening and gladdening of others besides themselves. He has the same consciousness to-day. The deep, living benefits He confers are as open to all ages as the sunshine and the air; there is no necessity binding any one soul to feel that life is a failure, an empty, disappointing husk, serving no good purpose, bringing daily fresh misery and deeper hopelessness, a thing perhaps manfully to fight our way through but certainly not to rejoice in. If any one has such views of life it is because he has not honestly, believingly, and humbly responded to Christ's word and come to Him.

¶ We all forget that Christ's teaching is not a teaching like that of Moses, of Mohammed, and like all other human teachings, that is, a doctrine of rules to be executed. Christ's teaching is a gospel, that is, a teaching of the good.

He who is thirsty, let him go and drink.

And so, according to this teaching it is impossible to prescribe to any one, to rebuke any one for anything, to condemn any one.

"Go and drink, if thou art thirsty," that is, take the good which is revealed to us by the spirit of Truth.

[1] Illingworth, *Personality, Human and Divine*, 201.

Can one be ordered to drink?
Can one be ordered to be blessed?
Even so a man cannot be rebuked for not drinking, or for not being blessed, nor can he be condemned. The one thing that Christians can do, and always have done, is to feel themselves blessed and to wish to communicate the key of blessedness to other people.[1]

(1) The invitation was delivered with great *earnestness*. This is the world's way turned upside down. We are accustomed to hear those crying who are ready to perish, while those who go out to save are calm and silent. Here this method is reversed. The lost whom He saves are silent and satisfied; the Saviour, who brings deliverance, cries. They act as if they were full, and He as if He were needy. Why did He cry? All things are His in heaven and on earth; what want is gnawing at the heart of Him in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily? It is the longing of His soul, not to get, but to give, redemption. He has a more eager desire to give pardon than any awakened sinner has to get it.

(2) "If any man." The invitation was *universal*. The Gospel is as free as the air or the sunshine. "Any"—the man may be atheist or deist or idolater; the man may be sceptical and unbelieving; the man may be broken-hearted, because all his cisterns are broken; the man may be disappointed with all the wells to which he has been accustomed to resort; the man may be an outcast, forbidden to come where men drink, or an apostate, one who has forsaken the fountain of living water; the man may be conscious that he deserves only to die of thirst; the man may be sad at his heart's core, and weary in every limb, and dying of thirst; the thirst may be morbid and foul, the thirst may be varied and deep, the thirst may be refined and elevated, but to every man Jesus says, "Come unto me." The thirsty one may have no apparel but rags and these filthy, no vessel but an earthen one and that broken, no money, no commendation; but Jesus says, "Come." He may have nothing, and may need everything—life, knowledge, power, joy—still Jesus says, "Come." He may be a most thirsty soul, with wide capacity and fiery eagerness, but Jesus says, "Come and drink." And if those who

[1] Tolstoy, *Aphorisms* (*Complete Works*, xix. 83).

hear Jesus say, "Come and drink," do come and drink, they live satisfied, they die satisfied, and they abide satisfied for ever; but if they never come, they live thirsty, die thirsty, and abide madly thirsty for ever.

(3) "Let him come unto me." The invitation is from a ceremony to a *Person*. Christ is a personal Saviour. The world had had enough of ritual. It had gone the weary round of form until life was almost extinct, and it seemed as if the smoke of sacrifice only darkened the skies and brought man no nearer vision of God. The Law increased the burden it professed to lift. Says Christ, It is not from Siloam's stream, it is not from your silver songs and solemn litanies, not from your priests and altars and censers, that you can gain rest—"If any man thirst, let him come unto *me*, and drink."

¶ He that thirsts and wants relief must come to *Christ Himself*. He must not be content with coming to His Church and His ordinances, or to the assemblies of His people for prayer and praise. He must not stop short even at His holy table, or rest satisfied with privately opening his heart to His ordained ministers. He that is content with only drinking these waters "shall thirst again." He must go higher, further, much further than this. He must have personal dealings with Christ Himself: all else in religion is worthless without Him. The King's palace, the attendant servants, the richly furnished banqueting-house, the very banquet itself, all are nothing unless we speak with the King. His hand alone can take the burden off our backs and make us feel free. The hand of man may take the stone from the grave and show the dead; but none but Jesus can say to the dead, "Come forth, and live." We must deal directly with Christ.[1]

¶ I remember a simple story that twined its clinging tendril fingers about my heart. It was of a woman whose long years had ripened her hair, and sapped her strength. She was a true saint in her long life of devotion to God. She knew the Bible by heart, and would repeat long passages from memory. But as the years came the strength went, and with it the memory gradually went too, to her grief. She seemed to have lost almost wholly the power to recall at will what had been stored away. But one precious bit still stayed. She would sit by the big sunny window of the sitting-room in her home, repeating over that one bit, as though chewing a delicious titbit, "I know whom I have believed

[1] Bishop J. C. Ryle, *The Upper Room*, 117.

and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." By and by part of that seemed to slip its hold, and she would quietly be repeating, "that which I have committed to him." The last few weeks as the ripened old saint hovered about the borderland between this and the spirit world, her feebleness increased. Her loved ones would notice her lips moving, and thinking she might be needing some creature comfort, they would go over and bend down to listen for her request. And time and again they found the old saint repeating over to herself one word, over and over again, the same one word, "Him—*Him*—Him." She had lost the whole Bible but one word. But she had the whole Bible in that one word."[1]

(4) "Let him come." He that thirsts and wants relief from Christ must actually *come* to Him. It is not enough to wish, and talk, and mean, and intend, and resolve, and hope. The thirsty have to *come*. To come in inquiry and by knowledge, to come in thought and by faith, to come in prayer and by trust, to come in the surrender of themselves to the Saviour. The sole condition is coming, and the only limit to the ministrations of the Saviour is our receptivity. Simple as this remedy for thirst appears, it is the only cure for man's spiritual disease, and the only bridge from earth to heaven. Kings and their subjects, preachers and hearers, masters and servants, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, all alike must drink of this water of life, and drink in the same way. For eighteen centuries men have laboured to find some other medicine for weary consciences; but they have laboured in vain. Thousands, after blistering their hands, and growing grey in hewing out "broken cisterns, which can hold no water," have been obliged to come back at last to the old Fountain, and have confessed in their latest moment that here, in Christ alone, is true peace.

(5) "And drink." Too many analyse, criticize, gather to the fountain and gaze on its waters; they do not *drink*. They do not live by Christ. When we drink of love we live on it, it enters into all our thoughts, colours all our hopes, gives strength to all our purposes; it is ourself. It must be even so with us and Christ. We must drink, must so draw His life and spirit into our souls that we shall be able to say, "For me to live is Christ." So shall the thirst of the heart be satisfied, but only so.

[1] S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks on Service*, 77.

¶ How many seem to come to Jesus Christ, and yet do not drink! How few Christians are like a tree planted by the rivers of water! What would you have thought of the Jews, if, when Moses smote the rock, they had refused to drink? or what would you have thought if they had only put the water to their lips? Yet such is the way with most Christians. It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell. The Spirit was given to Him without measure. The command is given to us to draw out of His fulness; yet who obeys? Not one in a thousand. A Christian in our day is like a man who has got a great reservoir brimful of water. He is at liberty to drink as much as he pleases, for he never can drink it dry; but instead of drinking the full stream that flows from it, he dams it up, and is content to drink the few drops that trickle through. O that ye would draw out of His fulness, ye that have come to Christ! Do not be misers of grace. There is far more than you will use in eternity. The same waters are now in Christ that refreshed St. Paul, that gave St. Peter his boldness, that gave St. John his affectionate tenderness. Why is your soul less richly supplied than theirs? Because you will not drink: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."[1]

2. Christ satisfies every thirst of the soul. Do we thirst for *activity*? Jesus says, "Come unto me, and drink." Hear Jesus say, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." He opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped deaf ears, made the lame to walk, healed the sick, cleansed the leper, and raised the dead. We thirst for *enjoyment*, and still Jesus says, "Come unto me, and drink." Christ gives joy in every gift, and promises it in every promise. There is joy in the eternal life He gives, joy in the rest He gives, and joy in the peace which He bequeaths. We thirst for *power*, and Christ continues to say, "Come unto me, and drink," for He makes His disciples now the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and ultimately He makes them kings and priests unto God. We thirst for *society*, and still Jesus says, "Come unto me, and drink." Our Saviour makes those who are strangers and foreigners and aliens fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. We thirst for *the love of others*, and Christ says, "Come unto me,

[1] R. M. M'Cheyne, *Additional Remains*, 308.

and drink"; for He directs streams of kindness to every one who comes to Him by means of His new commandment, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." We thirst for *knowledge*, and Jesus says, "Come unto me, and drink." "Learn of me." Those who come to Jesus are instructed by Him in the highest subjects. To all such Jesus is Himself the truth, and the truth concerning all that it is essential we should know. We thirst for *God*, and Jesus says, "Come unto me, and drink." He manifests God's name to us, and shows us how He Himself is to us the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His Person. Thus if any man thirst for life, activity, pleasure, social fellowship, knowledge, power, the love of others, or for God, He may come to Jesus Christ and drink.

3. No one who has not come thus to Christ and trusted Him has found perfect satisfaction in this world. Whatever good we have, we have not the highest good. Deep down in our hearts there is some want that has not been met, some secret thirst which yet torments us. We moralize, we philosophize about the discontent of man. We give little reasons for it; but the real reason of it all is this—that which everything lying behind it really signifies—that man is greater than his circumstances, and that God is always calling to him to come up to the fulness of his life. Dreadful will be the day when the world becomes contented, when one great universal satisfaction spreads itself over the world. Sad will be the day for every man when he becomes absolutely contented with the life that he is living, with the thoughts that he is thinking, with the deeds that he is doing, when there is not for ever beating at the doors of his soul some great desire to do something larger, which he knows that he was meant and made to do because he is the child of God.

I asked for Peace,—
My sins arose
And bound me close;
I could not find release.

I asked for Truth,—
  My doubts came in,
  And with their din
They wearied all my youth.

I asked for Love,—
  My lovers failed,—
  And griefs assailed
Around, beneath, above.

I asked for Thee,—
  And Thou didst come
  To take me home
Within Thy heart to be.[1]

[1] Digby Mackworth Dolben.

The Light of the World.

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THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Again therefore Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.—John viii. 12.

1. JESUS spoke these words in the Temple at Jerusalem. He was sitting in the treasury, within the court of the women; and it was the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, when this court was crowded with pilgrims.

The purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles was to commemorate a chapter in the life of the Hebrew nation away far back in its history. The observance of it was bound up with thoughts of the forty years' wanderings in the wilderness. It was held at the close of the harvest and the vintage, after the farmers had finished the round of the year's labours in the fields. When the set time arrived, the people quitted their homes to go up to Jerusalem; and they lived there during the week of the festival in small booths made of branches of olive, and palm, and myrtle, the purpose of this being to recall the tent-life of their fathers in the Arabian Desert. The little huts of greenery were set up in the open courts of the houses, upon the flat roofs, along the principal streets, in the open places of the city, and in some of the outer courts of the Temple.

Two characteristic ceremonies of this Festival gathered up in expressive symbols the lessons of a Divine sustenance and of a Divine Presence, which remained as the great results of the teaching of the desert, aud both of these were treated by Christ as parables of Himself. Each morning water was brought in a golden vessel from the Pool of Siloam and poured upon the altar of sacrifice. That water recalled to the people the supply drawn from the rock at Meribah, and pointed forward to the spiritual water which hereafter men should draw "out of the wells of

salvation." For in Christ the living rock, the image and the prophecy found their accomplishment; and so "in the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Then again, every evening there were lighted in one of the courts of the Temple two great lamps which are said to have cast their light over every quarter of the Holy City. These recalled the pillar of fire which had been in old times the sure token of Divine leadership and pointed forward to "the sun of righteousness" which should "arise with healing in his wings." In Christ—the "light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel" —the image and the prophecy found their accomplishment, "and therefore" He "spake again unto" the people, "saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."

2. "I am the light of the world." This is one of those short, pregnant statements of our Lord characteristic of this Gospel, which impress us at once by their brevity, their beauty, and their largeness of meaning. Statements of a similar kind, of equal terseness and force, occur to every one—"I am the good shepherd"; "I am the resurrection, and the life"; "I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

Sometimes Jesus gathers His work and nature up in one descriptive word, and offers it, as it were out of a wide-open hand, complete to His disciples. In such a word all the details of His relation to the soul and to the world are comprehensively included. As the disciple listens and receives it, he feels all his fragmentary and scattered experiences drawing together and rounding into unity. As, having heard it, he carries it forth with him into his life, he finds all future experiences claiming their places within it, and getting their meaning from it. Such words of Jesus are like spheres of crystal into which the world is gathered, and where the past and future, the small and great, may all be read.

What Divine audacity there is in such sayings! and how little we can suppose them to be the sayings of a mere teacher or prophet! They have no parallel in the words of even the greatest teachers. One and all imply something which the most powerful and enlightened, conscious of their own capacities to communicate

truth or to do good, would scruple to arrogate to themselves. They might claim respect for the truth they speak, and summon men to attend to it with a voice of authority. But no merely human teacher would dare to make himself the centre of all truth, and the centre of the world.

It was indeed a magnificent word, a stupendous word. It is one of those sayings of our Lord which prove that never man spake as this Man. It is utterly unaccountable and inexplicable save on one assumption. It either makes us tremble with a shock of surprise, with a feeling of doubt which we wish to crush down as blasphemy, or it brings us to our knees in worship, as before One who is lifted immeasurably above the ordinary limitations of humanity. There are only two possible conclusions to which we can come concerning such words as these. They are either the wildest words of audacity and self-deluded egotism that human lips ever uttered, or they are the language of one who was set far above all human criticism and judgment by His real and unmistakable Divinity. Had such a claim as this been made by the greatest teacher, prophet, or apostle of the ancient world, his words and memory would long since have perished in the scorn and disgust which it would have provoked; and were such a claim advanced by any person in the present day, there would be a universal feeling that mental derangement was at the base of it. No wonder that the men who listened to Him were either filled with indignation or inspired with reverential awe. No wonder that He seemed to them either a blasphemer or the Son of God. There could be no middle course. It was certain that the person who talked in this way would either be scorned and hated and crucified by the world or lifted by adoring hearts wholly above the world in love and honour and supremest adoration. And no middle course has ever been possible for long. Men have never continued to reverence Him as a man unless they have learned to worship Him as God. It is difficult to trust Him at all unless we trust Him all in all. These words are either so extravagant or so sublime, that the Man who spoke them was guilty of a self-conceit unparalleled in human history, or He was higher than the highest human thought can reach and not to be addressed save in the worshipful words of Thomas, "My Lord and my God." We have ever to make our choice, and most of us have made it to our

heart's rest and joy. We are sure that He knew what He was saying and had Divine right to say it: "I am the light of the world."

3. What does Jesus mean? How is He the light of the world? Let us understand what light is and does.

(1) "The light of the world," "the light of life"—the words send us instantly abroad into the world of Nature. They set us on the hilltop watching the sunrise as it fills the east with glory. They show us the great plain flooded and beaten and quivering with the noonday sun. They hush and elevate us with the mystery and sweetness and suggestiveness of the evening's glow.

Any one who has watched a sunrise among mountains will know how the light opens out depths of beauty and life where but lately the eye rested on a cold monotony of gloom or mist. At one moment only the sharp dark outline of the distant ranges stands out against the rosy sky, and at the next peak after peak catches the living fire, which then creeps slowly down their rocky slopes, and woods and streams and meadows and homesteads start out from the dull shadows, and the grass on which we stand sparkles with a thousand dewdrops.

¶ Walk on the central glacier of the Oberland in the gloom of a summer night. The grey clouds have hung about the Grimsel, and inflicted on you the sense of chill October, instead of bringing the sweet clearness of an August afternoon. The night has gathered starless and cold; but you are bent on your journey, though it requires all the energy of your determination to carry you through the discomforts of the march. The path at first is sharp and stony, then it is steep—steep in descent, steep in ascent—and your already tired and aching feet make you feel that it is hard to know which is the worse of the two. However, you have passed the polluted moraine, and at last you are on the ice. How cold it is! The breeze comes sweeping down the glacier, and chills you to the bone. Onward you go. The clouds are clearing. Things are better. Star after star is plain above you, and the giant mountains tower grim and gaunt around you, but, at any rate, less wrapped in shrouds. Onward you go, taking more and more courage. What is that shaft of amber, clear and fine as polished steel? What is that flash of deeper glory which shoots across the heavens? What is that line of scintillating gold and crimson which marks the crenulated crests of the mountains, and makes their snow-peaks and ice-lines like transparencies drenched

in living fire? How glorious it is, the breaking of the dawn—the breaking of a real splendid August morning over the region of eternal snow! Gradually it steals down the slope of the mountains, till the very glacier itself is aglow. Now a world is before you, startling in its wildness and beauty—your graceful Finster Aar and savage Schreckhorn, and Strahleck barrier, and then, beyond, the soaring Eiger and the grim and meditative Mönch. Wild and beautiful in form and strangeness,—it is all before you now. Ah! it was all there, in its strangeness and stateliness, even when you shivered in the mist and darkness. It was all before you; but to *you* it was useless, unperceived, unwondered at. You needed the magic of *light* to reveal it. You *know* what it is, though it was there before you knew it. You are a debtor to the tender mystery of the dawn.[1]

¶ Twice recently has it been my privilege to watch the sun rise in circumstances of unusual beauty. Long before his appearing we had tokens of his coming. The horizon, and the clouds that gathered in little flocks about the horizon, and banks of clouds further remote abiding motionless in the highest places, began to clothe themselves in appropriate raiment to welcome the sovereign of the morning. Dull greys, gleaming silver, deep reds, dark purple—all available hues were to be seen in that array. Then in the fulness of time the great flame rode out among the encircling glories, making them all appear dim and faint in the presence of his own effulgence.[2]

(2) Now the idea of light, long before the time of St. John, had become spiritual in its religious application; and when Christ speaks of Himself as the "light of the world," it is no darkness of nature that He has in view, but the darkness that rests on men's thoughts and life, the darkness that all true men feel more or less in themselves. Wherever men have arisen to the power of thought, and are capable of looking "before and after," there comes home to them a deep sense of their ignorance. Their outlook is fast bound on all sides; and "more light" is their instinctive cry amid encircling darkness, or a twilight of uncertainty more perplexing sometimes than darkness itself. They look upwards, and long that the day may break on their mental struggle, and the shadows flee away from their hearts. The outward light is not enough. The eye is not satisfied with seeing. There is the conscious need of a higher light than ever

[1] Knox Little, *The Light of Life*, 4. [2] J. H. Jowett, *The Silver Lining*, 69.

lit up sea or shore. The darkness of the world, in short, is a moral darkness, in which man is often unable to see his true way or choose his own good.

> He that has light within his own clear breast
> May sit i' the centre, and enjoy bright day:
> But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts
> Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
> Himself is his own dungeon.[1]

¶ "I am the light of the world"; and before His coming, His appearance was foretold in tokens of purple and gold. Here and there, in Isaiah and Jeremiah, we have great peaks tipped with the light of the coming day, suggesting the glory in which the whole world would be bathed in after time. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd"; is not that a foretoken of the tenth chapter of John? "Liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound"; is not this the herald of the wonderful happenings which thrill the gospel story through and through? And then, after all these golden hints of promise there came the Sun, the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings, and the whole world passed into a new day.[2]

(3) But Christ's words must be interpreted by their reference to the light which was then being celebrated. Of that light we read that "the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light." This was a customary mode of directing the movements of large bodies of men, whether caravans or armies. In the case of an army a tall pole was erected in front of the chief's tent, and from it a basket of fire was suspended, so that the glare of it was visible by night, and its smoke by day. The head of a marching column could thus be descried from a great distance, especially in wide level tracts with little or no vegetation and few inequalities of surface to interrupt the view. The distinctive peculiarity of the Israelitish march was that Jehovah was in the fire, and that He alone controlled its movements and thereby the movements of the camp. When the pillar of cloud left its place and advanced the tents were struck, lest the people should be separated from Jehovah and be found unfaithful to Him. During the whole course of their sojourn in the wilderness their move-

[1] Milton, *Comus*.

[2] J. H. Jowett, *The Silver Lining*, 69.

ments were thus controlled and ordered. The beacon-fire that led them was unaffected by atmospheric influences. Dispelled by no gales, and evaporated by no fiercest heat of the Eastern sun, it hovered in the van of the host as the guiding angel of the Lord. The guidance it gave was uninterrupted and unerring; it was never mistaken for an ordinary cloud, it never so altered its shape as to become unrecognizable. And each night the flame shot up, and assured the people they might rest in peace.

¶ There is no difficulty in understanding what was in our Lord's mind at this time. Already He had made two distinct allusions to the incidents of the wilderness journey. In the sixth chapter He spoke of the manna which God had sent down from heaven, and He said: "I am the bread of life." Then in the seventh chapter He spoke of the water which gushed out of the rock, and He said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink"; as much as to say, "I am the rock from which the living water flowed." And in the text it is said: "Then spake Jesus *again* unto them"—implying that He was taking up the same subject after a little interval—"saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life," alluding, evidently, to the third great symbol of the exodus, the pillar of fire, by which Jehovah guided His people through the wilderness. So it seems clear that our Lord is referring here to Himself as the fulfilment of this great Old Testament type—"I am the light of the world."

4. There are two things, then, that light does, and it seems as if Christ had them both before Him when He said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness." The first is that it enables us to see. Enter a dark room and you do not see anything; but bring a light and you see what the room contains. The other is that it guides us. The lights at the harbour mouth are there to guide vessels safely into the harbour. And one has sometimes discovered the use of a light, even though it were but the glimmer of a candle in a cottage window, when one has been overtaken by the darkness on some hillside or unfrequented moor. So we have—

I. Christ is the Light of the world because He enables men to see what is in the world.

II. Christ is the Light of the world because He guides men through the world.

I.

He Enables Men to See.

The lights by the altar in the Temple were memorials of the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. When, then, Jesus says, "I am the light of the world," He would declare Himself as being in reality, and to every soul of man to the end of time, what that cloud with its heart of fire was in outward seeming to one generation of desert wanderers. Now, the first thing which it was to these was the visible vehicle of the Divine presence. "The Lord went before them in a pillar of a cloud." "The Lord looked through the pillar." "The Lord came down in the cloud, and spake unto him." "The cloud covered the tabernacle, and the glory of the Lord appeared." Such is the way in which it is ever spoken of, as being the manifestation to Israel in sensible form of the presence among them of God their King.

1. He enabled men *to see God.*

(1) He made clear in His own life and words the Divine idea, as no one had done before, and no one has ever done since. Men had been struggling with this idea from the first efforts of religious speculation. It was still unformed and imperfect. Outside of revelation it fluctuated and took many shapes, now presenting itself as a multiplicity of Divine energies, with more or less coherence; and now retreating into a vague Absolute or Necessity, encompassing all being, but without thought or love for any. Polytheism more refined or more sensualistic, and Pantheism more or less abstract, divided the thought of the Gentile world. On the other hand, the idea of God had been to the Hebrews one of growing clearness. He was the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of Israel, who had given the covenant on Mount Sinai, who had led their fathers by the way of the wilderness into the promised land, a "jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation," and yet also "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin," a holy God, "of purer eyes than to behold evil," even a Father whose pitying mercy was able to measure all the depths

of our weakness. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

This sublime conception of the Hebrew mind was perfected in Christ. Every attribute of spiritual excellence was brought out into clearer distinction, and every element less exalted was enlarged and purified. Hitherto the God of the Hebrews had remained too isolated and apart. With all their growth of religious intelligence—the voice of the Divine always speaking more clearly as we descend the course of their prophetic literature—there still clung certain restrictions to their highest conception. Jehovah was their God in some special manner—the Giver of their Law, the God of their Temple, who was to be worshipped in Jerusalem. They had difficulty in enlarging the Divine idea so as to embrace the human race, in rising above local privilege and national prerogative to the thought of God as the spiritual Source and Guide of all men alike. Christ fixed for ever this great thought. "God is a Spirit," He said; "and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem," was there any special virtue, so far as the Divine presence was concerned. This presence was universal and universally spiritual, embracing all life, claiming the homage and devotion, the faith and love, of all moral intelligence—the presence of the Father as well as the Sovereign of men.

(2) How did He accomplish this? By the manifestation of His person even more than by His doctrine, since He said, not "I bring the light and the truth," but "I *am* the light, and I *am* the truth." He is the light of the world, because in Him is the glory of God. His words are madness, and something very like blasphemy, unless they are vindicated by the visible indwelling in Him of the present God. The cloud of the humanity, "the veil, that is to say, his flesh," enfolds and tempers; and through its transparent folds it reveals, even while it swathes, the Godhead. Like some fleecy vapour flitting across the sun, and irradiated by its light, it enables our weak eyes to see light, and not darkness, in the else intolerable blaze. Yes! Thou art the light of the world, because in Thee dwelleth "the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Thy servant hath taught us the meaning of Thy words,

when he said: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

¶ In that famous picture which Holman Hunt has painted of this wonderful scene and utterance in the Saviour's life, there is one fatal blunder, as it appears at least to those who read Jesus with clearest eyes. The Saviour stands in the encircling gloom, lamp in hand, through which rays of light stream out upon the dusky archways of the Temple, upon the shadowy forms in the background, and upon His own sad, beautiful face. But it is from the lamp which He carries that the illumination comes. That is the mistake. It ought to have been shown as the irradiation from His own person, the glory of His own face, the sunlight of His own matchless purity, grace, and love. He *Himself* is the light of the world—not what He taught, but what He was and did. His very incarnation is the world's light. The fact that God could and did dwell in a human form, could speak through human lips, and think through a human mind, and feel the beatings of a human heart, and suffer all human pangs, and render into perfect beauty a human life; the fact that God's great, awful, mysterious, holy, and loving nature could have its abode in the flesh in a body like our own and glorify it,—that to begin with, and more than all things else, is the light of the world, for it lightens the face of every man that comes into the world.[1]

2. Christ has made clear not only the idea of God, but *the idea of man.*

(1) The two ideas everywhere interchange, and react the one upon the other. The glory of Christ is that He seized so clearly the spiritual essence of both, and set the great realities of the spiritual life in man in front of the Supreme Spiritual Reality whom He revealed. There is nowhere for a moment any doubt in Christ as to what the true life of man is. He is here and now, a creature of nature, like all other creatures; but his true life is not natural, like that of the fowls of the air or the lilies of the field. He is essentially a moral being, with relations beyond nature, and wants and aspirations and duties which connect him with a Divine or Supernatural order. From first to last this spiritual conception underlies the Gospels, and makes itself felt in them. There is no argument, because there is no hesitation. "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

[1] J. G. Greenhough, *The Cross in Modern Life*, 90.

The possibility of a negative answer is not supposed. The claims of the natural order, some have even thought, are unduly depressed. The spiritual life seems to overshadow and displace them. But this is only by way of emphasis, and in order to rouse man from the dreams of a mere sensual existence. "After all these things do the Gentiles seek"—those who know no better, to whom the meaning of the spiritual and Divine order has not come. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." The spiritual must be held in its true place as primary; after this the natural has also its place, and is to be recognized in addition.

(2) But the great thought is, that man is the dependant of a Divine kingdom, everywhere transcending the visible and present world. God has made him in His own image, and loves him, however far he may have degraded that image and wandered away from Divine good. He claims man as His own—as rightfully belonging to the higher world of spiritual intelligence, of which He is the Head. And so Christ came "to seek and to save that which was lost."

Surely this is a higher conception of human life than that of either ancient or modern secularism—a conception truer to the radical instincts of human nature, ever looking beyond the present, and owning the power of more than earth-born thoughts. From the fact of sin itself and a sense of wrong there comes a voice which speaks of something better—of a life akin to angels and to God. The very misery of man attests his greatness, and that there is more in his life, which "appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away," than the experience of a day. Towards this thought the yearnings of all larger hearts, and the searchings of all higher minds, had pointed for centuries. It was the dream alike of Plato and of Cicero, of Egypt and of Persia. Hebrew Prophecy and Psalmody had grasped it more firmly as the Divine shone upon them more clearly. Yet withal it remained a comparative uncertainty before Christ. He, as no one before Him had done, held forth before men the conception of a higher life, greater than all the prizes of earth, and more enduring than all the accidents of time. That which was but faintly apprehended by Gentile philosopher, or even Jewish seer,

was made manifest by the appearing and resurrection of our Lord, "who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." As St. Peter says in his First Epistle, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

Christ asserts for man his true dignity and his rightful place in the universe of matter and of spirit. There is no single point in respect to which Christ has wrought so complete a revolution as in respect to the dignity and worth of the individual man. He effected this change, not by teaching a new philosophy, but by living a new life, and consecrating that life by His pitying death. He came to save man, not because man was wise or worthy, but because he was ignorant and lost, and yet could be exalted to wisdom and holiness. Therein did He declare that the lowliest and the most simple have an intrinsic worth in the judgment of God, such as the world had never before accorded to man as man. It was the reproach of Christ, that He consorted with publicans and sinners. His eating with them, however, did not signify that He sympathized with them as they were; it signified that He knew what they might become. To accomplish His work for man, Christ not only was found in fashion as a man, but, being such, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death—even the death of the cross. In this He attested still more strikingly what manhood, as manhood, is worth in the judgment of God. It is not surprising that the light that streamed from Christ's life and death slowly but surely effected changes so great in all the estimates that Christendom has learned to put upon man.

How great is little man!
  Sun, moon, and stars respond to him,
  Shine or grow dim
Harmonious with his span.

How little is great man!
  More changeable than changeful moon,
  Nor half in tune
With Heaven's harmonious plan.

Ah rich man! ah poor man!
  Make ready for the testing day
  When wastes away
What bears not fire or fan.

Thou heir of all things, man
  Pursue the saints by heavenward track:
  They looked not back;
Run thou, as erst they ran.

Little and great is man:
  Great if he will, or if he will
  A pigmy still;
For what he will he can.[1]

(3) The new ideal of man was set forth by our Lord not only in His discourses but in Himself. Jesus never taught a systematic and scientific morality. He simply replaced the moral world on its true axis, which is the love of God and of man; but on no occasion did He attempt a classification of our duties, a complete explanation of the motives, aims, impulses, and restraining forces of our moral conduct. In the Sermon on the Mount, He showed the inner and spiritual nature of the law; He pointed out what is true purity and love. In His inimitable parables He has taught us, by many examples, what are the conditions of eternal life; but it is, above all, by the manifestation of His Person, and by the radiance of His life, that He has revealed to us the moral ideal of humanity. For the first time, a life absolutely fulfilling the moral law was seen in Him, a life wholly directed by the love of God and man, a life in which there is not an action, a word, a thought, or an impulse of the heart which does not conduce to the glory of God and the good of mankind, and which is not inspired, filled, penetrated by this love. In Him we see for the first time the admirable union of all those virtues which seem contrary to each other, and which usually exclude each other—authority and simplicity, majesty and humility, strength and gentleness, hatred of evil and tender mercy, purity without asceticism, condescension without servility; so that, to employ an image which the subject affords us, just as the various colours which are separated by the prism—red, orange, yellow,

[1] C. G. Rossetti, *Poems*, 121.

green, blue, and violet—vivid and brilliant as they are, form, when united, a perfect white of spotless beauty, so all those different features which compose the form of Christ unite and blend in a harmony so extraordinary and so lifelike that it is imprinted for ever on the conscience of mankind. Through Him, light has for ever been thrown upon man. In Him, man has been seen as he ought to be. This great example stands before us; and wherever it is seen, the absolute return to darkness is impossible. Doubtless the powers of darkness may fall at times on portions of humanity; baseness, lying, hypocrisy, and violence may even shelter themselves under the name of Christ; but misconception and confusion will not last long; the light will at length be triumphant, the delusive shadows, the hideous nightmares, will disappear, and, in the fair and glorious daybreak of morning, justice, purity, and love will shine forth resplendent.

¶ Science is teaching us lessons concerning the physical structure of the universe. The same stuff is ablaze in Sirius and the Sun and the flaming heart of the earth, and so Jesus Christ gives us the moral unity of all the worlds. The setting of the next life we can little imagine, but this we know, that God's ideal of life is Jesus Christ. We are to be like Him. That is the real predestination. He who in both worlds delighted to do His Father's will, suffered with brave hope, obeyed with changeless fidelity, served with supreme, unfailing love, is the universal type. God tells us that it is enough to be like Him. The words He uttered, "Good and faithful," are negotiable in both worlds. Character and capacity are all of life that we can take with us when death swings open the door from this into the next room in our Father's house.[1]

3. But now, since Jesus has perfectly revealed to us what God is and what man ought to be, *He has lighted up the profound abyss which separates man from God.* The more His holiness is made evident and clear, the more evident does our own imperfection become; all our virtues pale beside His perfection, as the false glitter of glass trinkets is outshone by the lustre of a pure diamond. His purity brings out the frightful and repulsive character, not only of our crimes, but of those thoughts, evil intentions, hatreds, and covetous desires, which, though unreached by human law, are revealed through Him. He shows us at once

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 62.

the evil that we have done, and the good which we have neglected to do; He casts a searching light on all hollow pretence, on all ostentation, pursuit of earthly glory, and selfishness more or less cleverly dissimulated. Never before Him had our nature been so profoundly, so accurately judged; never before had man been so clearly revealed to man. Thus were realized the prophetic words which the aged Simeon pronounced over the child Jesus—that by Him the thoughts of many hearts would be revealed (Luke ii. 35). Thus the light which shines forth from His person, and which at first attracts us by its sublimity, ends by becoming overwhelming and terrible when it penetrates to the depths of our being, and clearly shows our corruption.

(1) One phase of the mystery of man is that which meets us in the mass of sin, and seemingly base, lost life, which there is in the world. It is that same mystery of man's moral nature; only not of its struggling, but of where it has ceased to struggle. That is the terrible thing which one is apt to feel wherever life is in dense masses, as in large cities—the multitudes who do not seem to struggle, who are complacent in the hollowest shams of vanity and folly; who are sunk in low, grovelling tastes, from which nothing seems to rouse them; who grow up hard, bold, defiant, and despise the very efforts that you make to help them upwards. And there are yet deeper abysses: all the lost, broken-down lives that fester in the byways of our cities; the masses of crime; the even more hopeless baseness of those who fatten by fostering crime,—whole classes, lost, lost, so lost that we cannot tell even how to try to save them, how to begin to try! And what is to be the end and outcome of it all?

(2) This light would be overpowering, and would leave us without hope, if, after having shown us our misery, it did not at the same time reveal the Divine mercy, if it did not show us in God a love greater than our rebellion, a pardon greater than our iniquity. This is what "Christ crucified" teaches us beyond all else, and it is for this reason that these grand words, "I am the light of the world," never appear grander or more true than when they emanate from the Cross. At the foot of the Cross the sinner sees and receives a pardon truly worthy of God, because it completely satisfies His justice while at the same time revealing His mercy.

¶ In the Howard Prize Essay for 1885, on "The Preservation of Health," by Dr. Clement Dukes, the following passage occurs: "Light is not only the great preserver of health, but a great preventer of disease; for Tyndall found that sunlight arrested the growth of organisms, so that, as Dr. Murphy states, sunlight serves the double purpose of aiding the growth of those organisms which are necessary for man, as well as of man himself, while it retards the production of those which are antagonistic to his existence." Many illustrations are given of this in the essay. The author, drawing upon his own experience, says that when house surgeon in a London hospital, he found that in one of its wards, which was very dark, simple fractures took seven to fourteen days longer in uniting than they would have done in a well-lighted ward, whilst they were afraid to put compound fractures in it at all; and when, from want of space, they were compelled to do so, they chose a bed where the light was greatest. Florence Nightingale, as the result of her wide observation, remarks: "One of the greatest observers of human things says: 'Where there is sun there is thought.' All physiology goes to confirm this. Where is the shady side of deep valleys, there is cretinism. Where are cellars and the unsunned sides of narrow streets, there is the degeneracy and weakness of the human race; mind and body equally degenerating. Put the pale, withering plant and human being into the sun, and, if not too far gone, each will recover heart and spirit." In France there are hospitals where they trust almost entirely to light for the cure of disease. Surely there is here an earthly analogue to a spiritual fact, namely, that only by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness can the evil growths in humanity be stayed and the good ones be fostered.

¶ I was talking some time ago to a City Missionary, an earnest-hearted woman working in the worst parts of one of our great cities; and she told me, how, at first, her work made her utterly despairing. There seemed to be nothing she could do; and she was among a whole population who seemed just sinking down, down to hell—nothing else for it, according to all her old creed. She told me how she used to go home and be haunted with the horror of it; and then she went out again, praying, and longing, and trying, but still reaching only one here and there. But one day it came to her—just the thought of the Heavenly Father's love shadowed forth in Christ's, and compared to which her love could be nothing; and like a great flood of light it all broke upon her, that she could trust Him. Why should she be racking her soul with anxiety almost to madness as if she alone in

this great universe cared for them? And ever after that, she told me, she had laboured on, not less earnestly than before, but with an easier, freer heart, feeling the mystery losing itself not in darkness, but in light. That light was Christ's. That anxiety of love for sinners, and that trustful thought of God, are both from Him. There were kind loving hearts before Christ, sad for human suffering; but nowhere, before, do you find that peculiar sadness for sin, and for the poor, lost sinners of the world. That is like a new light upon the great dark mystery, the light of a new love, which has ever since been working in the world; and, the light of a greater love still than ours, a love in the infinite Heart of things, a love to which our hearts go out in that strong trustful plea Whittier has shaped for us—

> Father of all,—Thy erring child may be
> Lost to himself, but never lost to Thee![1]

II.

He Guides Men.

The second thought is that Christ, like the pillar of cloud and fire to the Israelites, is a guiding light to us in our march through the wilderness of this world.

But if Christ is to lead we must follow. "*He that followeth me* shall not walk in darkness." The first demand is for obedience. How emphatically the Book of Numbers (chap. ix.) dwells upon the absolute control of all the marches and halts by the movements of the cloud. When it was taken up, they journeyed; when it settled down, they encamped. As long as it lay spread above the Tabernacle, there they stayed. Impatient eyes might look, and impatient spirits chafe—no matter. The camp might be pitched in a desolate place, away from wells and palm trees, away from shade, among fiery serpents, and open to fierce foes—no matter. As long as the pillar was motionless, no man stirred. Weary, slow days might pass in this compulsory inactivity; but "whether it were two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, abiding thereon, the children of Israel journeyed not." And whenever it lighted itself up,—no matter how short had been the halt, how weary and foot-sore the people, how pleasant the resting-place—up with the tent-

[1] B. Herford, *Courage and Cheer*, 144.

pegs immediately, and away. Whether the signal was given at midnight, when all but the watchers slept, or at mid-day, it was all the same.

All true following of Christ begins with faith, or we might almost say that following *is* faith, for we find our Lord substituting the latter expression for the former in another passage of this Gospel parallel with the present. "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." The two ideas are not equivalent, but faith is the condition of following; and following is the outcome and test, because it is the operation, of faith. None but they who trust Him will follow Him. He who does not follow does not trust. To follow Christ means to long and strive after His companionship; as the Psalmist says, "My soul followeth hard after thee." It means the submission of the will, the effort of the whole nature, the daily conflict to reproduce His example, the resolute adoption of His command as our law, His providence as our will, His fellowship as our joy.

Between teaching and leading there may be all the difference that there is between theory and practice. A teacher may content himself with the thought, the attention, the contemplation, of his pupils, but a leader calls for action. That is precisely the note which is struck in these words: "he that followeth me." Like the host in the wilderness following the pillar of fire, like the pilgrims to Mecca following the fire-cages slung high upon the poles, so must men follow this Christ, that they may not walk in darkness, but may have the light of life.

1. We have the promise that if we follow faithfully we shall not walk in darkness. This is true in practice of life and its perplexities. Nobody who has not tried it would believe how many difficulties are cleared out of a man's road by the simple act of trying to follow Christ. No doubt there will still remain obscurities enough as to what we ought to do, to call for the best exercise of patient wisdom; but an enormous proportion of them vanish like mist when the sun breaks through, when once we honestly set ourselves to find out whither the pillared Light is guiding. It is a reluctant will, and intrusive likings and dislikings, that obscure the way for us, much oftener than real

obscurity in the way itself. It is seldom impossible to discern the Divine will, when we only wish to know it that we may do it. And if ever it is impossible for us, surely that impossibility is like the cloud resting on the Tabernacle—a sign that for the present His will is that we should be still, and wait, and watch.

¶ I only speak my own experience; I am not talking theology or philosophy: I know what I am saying, and can point out the times and places when I should have fallen if I had been able to rely for guidance upon nothing better than a commandment. But the pure, calm, heroic image of Jesus confronted me, and I succeeded. I had no doubt as to what He would have done, and through Him I did not doubt what I ought to do.[1]

¶ So the years went on, and the sense of unreality in my teaching grew steadily more intense and intolerable. I saw myself continually expending all the forces of my mind on theories which left me and my hearers alike unchanged in the essential characteristics of our lives. I felt myself, like St. Augustine, but a "seller of rhetoric." I was inculcating a method of life which I myself did not obey, or obeyed only in those respects that caused me neither sacrifice nor inconvenience. In order to continue such labours at all various forms of excuse and self-deception were required. Thus I flattered myself that I was at least maintaining the authority of morals. I did not perceive that morals are of no value to the world until vitalized by emotion. At other times I preached with strenuous zeal the superiority of the Christian religion, and dilated on its early triumphs. This pleased my hearers, for it always flatters men to find themselves upon the winning side. What I wonder at now is that they did not perceive that my zeal to prove Christianity true was exactly proportioned to my fear that it was false. Men do not seek to prove that of which they are assured. Jesus never sought to prove the existence of a God, because He was assured of it; He simply asserted and commanded. In my heart of hearts I knew that I was not sure. But I did not easily discover the reason of my uncertainty. I supposed the source to be the destructive criticism of the Gospels which had reduced Jesus Himself to a probability. In my private thoughts I argued that it was no longer possible to feel the intense reality of Christ. Francis might feel it, Catherine might feel it, because they lived in an atmosphere of poetry, unchilled by criticism. I could never feel as they felt because I could not transport myself into their atmosphere. Yet as often as I turned to these great lives, some-

[1] Mark Rutherford.

thing thrilled within me, some living responsive fibre, so that I knew that I was not after all quite alien to them. Could it be that there was that in me that made me, or could make me, of their company? But how could I attain to their faith? What could give back to a modern man, tortured by a thousand perplexities of knowledge of which they never dreamed, the reality of Christ which they possessed? And then the answer came—not suddenly, but as a still small voice growing louder, more positive, more intense—*Live the Life.* Try to do some at least of the things that Jesus did. Seek through experience what can never come through ratiocination. *Be* a Francis; then it may be thou shalt think like him, and know Jesus as he knew Him. Live the life—there is no other way.[1]

2. But there is a higher meaning in the words than even this promise of practical direction. In the profound symbolism of Scripture, especially of this Gospel, "darkness" is the name for the whole condition of the soul averted from God. So our Lord here is declaring that to follow Him is the true deliverance from that midnight of the soul. There is a darkness of ignorance, a darkness of impurity, a darkness of sorrow; and in that threefold gloom, thickening to a darkness of death, are they enwrapt who follow not the Light. That is the grim, tragical side of this saying, too sad, too awful for our lips to speak much of, and best left in the solemn impressiveness of that one word. But the hopeful, blessed side of it is, that the feeblest beginnings of trust in Jesus Christ, and the first tottering steps that try to tread in His, bring us into the light. It is not necessary that we should have reached our goal, it is enough that our faces are turned to it, and our hearts desire to attain it; then we may be sure that the dominion of the darkness over us is broken. To follow, though it be afar off, and with unequal steps, fills our path with increasing brightness, and even though evil and ignorance and sorrow may thrust their blackness in upon our day, they are melting in the growing glory, and already we may give thanks "unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

¶ Only he can be a true follower whose life and love are in

[1] W. J. Dawson, *The Empire of Love*, 112.

union with the life and love in Christ. He will not be "light in the Lord" until his will is intermarried with the will of his Lord. Every man who is thus joined to the Lord is one Spirit with Him, and walks in His marvellous Light. He is inly and immovably persuaded that nothing can separate his love from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus his Lord; and the comforting, assuring light of this love floods his understanding. The love of God in his will, and the light of God in his mind, make him a new man. The descent of God's life and light to dwell in his soul makes him sure and certain of his final ascent to God.

3. But we have not merely the promise that we shall be led by the light and brought into the light. A yet deeper and grander gift is offered here: "He shall have the light of life." That means, not, as it is often carelessly taken to mean, a light which illuminates the life, but, like the similar phrases of this Gospel—"bread of life," "water of life,"—light which is life. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." These two are one in their source, which is Jesus, the Word of God. Of Him we have to say, "With thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." They are one in their deepest nature; the life is the light, and the light the life. And this one gift is bestowed upon every soul that follows Christ. Not only will our outward lives be illumined or guided from without, but our inward being will be filled with the brightness. "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord."

This is the great distinction between the light which Christ is and the light by which the Israelites were led from day to day. They had an external means of ascertaining promptly which way they should go. Their whole life was circumscribed, and its place and mode determined for them. The guidance offered to us by Christ is of an inward kind. A God without might seem perfect as a guide, but a God within is the real perfection. God does not now lead us by a sign which we could follow, though we had no real sympathy with Divine ways and no wisdom of our own; He leads us by communicating to us His own perceptions of right and wrong, by inwardly enlightening us, and by making us ourselves of such a disposition that we naturally choose what is good.

¶ If I had fulness of life I would have perfectness of vision;

I would know what God is, what man is, what heaven is. Is it not written, "This is life eternal that they should know thee"? And yet, marvellous to tell, this unspeakable glory may be mine —be mine now, here, in the midst of the present world: "He that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." It is not by dying it shall come to me; it is by following—following the steps of the Master through life's strait gate and life's narrow way. It is by taking up the cross, by lifting the burden, by bearing the sacrifice, by doing the will, that the doctrine shall be known to me.[1]

The still commandress of the silent night
  Borrows her beams from her bright brother's eye;
His fair aspect fills her sharp horns with light;
  If he withdraw, her flames are quench'd and die;
E'en as the beams of thy enlight'ning Sp'rit,
  Infus'd and shot into my dark desire,
  Inflame my thoughts, and fill my soul with fire,
That I am ravish'd with a new delight;
  But if thou shroud thy face, my glory fades,
And I remain a nothing, all composed of shades.

Eternal God! O Thou that only art
  The sacred fountain of eternal light,
And blessed loadstone of my better part,
  O Thou, my heart's desire, my soul's delight,
Reflect upon my soul, and touch my heart,
  And then my heart shall prize no good above Thee;
  And then my soul shall know Thee; knowing, love Thee;
And then my trembling thoughts shall never start
  From Thy commands, or swerve the least degree,
Or once presume to move, but as they move in Thee.[2]

4. Christ is our guiding light even unto death. The night cometh. I shall have to lie down and die. Is there any light? "I am the light." He claims that to those who are in Him the night shineth even as the day. What does my Lord do in the hour of death to break up the reign of darkness? He gives us the cheer of sovereignty. "All things are yours . . . death!" Then I do not belong to death? No, death belongs to me. Death is not my master, he is my servant. He is made to minister to me in the hour of translation, and I shall not be enslaved by his approach.

[1] G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, 251. [2] Francis Quarles.

¶ That was a true and beautiful word uttered by Mrs. Booth when she was passing home: "The waters are rising, but I am not sinking!" Death was her minister, floating her forward to glory. "All things are yours . . . death." And my Lord further softens the night by the gracious light of fellowship. "I will be with thee." When we are in fine and congenial company how the time passes! The hours slip away and we marvel when the moment for separation comes. And so it will be in death! Our company will be so rich and welcome that the season will pass before we know it. I think the Christian's first wondering question on the other side will be: "Am I really through? Really?" "Even the night shall be light about thee." It matters not how stormy the night may be, the Light of Life shall never be blown out. "At eventide it shall be light."[1]

¶ Whence are we—and whither? Especially, whither? How that question has pressed upon the heart of man. Do you remember the first living glimpse that we get of our old Saxon forefathers, as they stood facing Christianity, not yet converted to it, but wondering if perhaps it might be true? They are facing it with this mystery of the unknown beyond pressing on their hearts. I know few more beautiful episodes in old-world thought. It was a few years after Augustine had come as a missionary to England, and in the rude North, King Edwin of Northumbria had gathered his chiefs and thanes together in "Witenagemot," or "Wise men's meeting," that they might consider this new faith. One by one they told their faith about it, but the best word spoken was this. Said one of the thanes: "Truly the life of man in this world is on this wise. It is as when thou, O King, art feasting with thy thanes in winter-time, when the hearth is lighted and the hall is warm; but without, the rains and the snows are falling, and the winds howl. Then cometh a sparrow and flieth through the hall; it cometh in by one door and goeth out at the other. When a little moment brief and pleasant is passed, it disappears, and from winter returns to winter again. So is it with the life of man, O King. It is but for a moment; what goeth before it, and what cometh after it, wot we not at all. Wherefore, if these strangers can tell us aught, let us hearken to them and follow their law."[2]

5. And, finally, Christ guides His followers to another and a better life. Through the opened doors of that immortality which He has brought to light by means of His gospel, there has

[1] J. H. Jowett, *The Silver Lining*, 73.
[2] B. Herford, *Courage and Cheer*, 145.

streamed ever since a steady radiance, towards which the hearts of all men have turned with thankfulness and hope. Christ has done for immortality what He had done for theism. He has not demonstrated it to the reason, but He has verified it as a fact. He has not superseded the necessity of searching and scrutinizing its possibility or probability on grounds of reason, but He has enforced these demonstrations by the best attested events of human history; and He stands before the rational faith of men declaring afresh to all the generations, "I am he that liveth and was dead," and "Behold, I am alive for evermore," and "Because I live, ye shall live also."

¶ What about the morrow? When the river is crossed, is there any light upon the regions beyond? Am I to gaze into blackness, impenetrable, inscrutable? "I am the light." What kind of light does He give me here? "In my Father's house!" Is there not a softening gleam in the very phrase? Look here for a sheaf of rays of welcome light. "In my Father's house," there is our habitation! "I go to prepare a place for you," there is the preparation for us! "I will receive you unto myself," there is a welcome for us! Does not this throw the soft light of the morning on the Beyond? The same light which has been given to me along the way of time will shine upon me in the realms of the new day. "The Lord God is the light thereof." So you see it is Jesus all the way; my light to-day, to-night, to-morrow![1]

¶ There is an ancient prayer for the departed which runs: Grant them, O Lord, eternal rest, and let light perpetual shine upon them.

[1] J. H. Jowett, *The Silver Lining*, 74.

Truth and Freedom.

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Truth and Freedom.

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . . If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.—John viii. 32, 36.

1. In the text we find united two of the greatest words in our language. There are perhaps no words in the language which have been so variously interpreted, or around which the conflict of opinion has raged more fiercely; no words which have had greater power to call forth the energy and devotion of human hearts, or which, on the other hand, have more often been employed to give an ideal colouring to base and selfish ends. How many rebels against just law, or wholesome moral restraint, have masked their caprice under the name of liberty; how many fires of persecution have been kindled in the pretended cause of truth! And, on the other hand, what noble battles have been fought for the most sacred interests of humanity, which were identified with these two names! We should blot out half of the heroic pages of history if we were to erase the deeds done, and the sufferings endured, for Truth and Freedom. In the text the two words are used to throw light upon each other, and, as it were, to exclude the false interpretations which might be given to each taken by itself. That is Truth which makes me really free; that is the genuine and only valuable Freedom which is based upon the Truth.

2. Let us recall the occasion on which the words were spoken. To some who had attached themselves (slightly, as it would seem) to Him, the Lord had said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Instead of joyfully accepting, they resented this gracious encouraging word of His, this promise, "Ye

shall *be made* free," and rejoined in displeasure—"We were never in bondage to any man." How strangely men are often blinded by pride and presumption! Listen to these proud Jews, "We were never in bondage to any man"; while yet the whole past history of their nation was the record of one bondage following hard on another, they for their sins having come at one time or another under the yoke of almost every people round about them. They had been, by turns, in bondage to the Canaanites, in bondage to the Philistines, in bondage to the Syrians, in bondage to the Chaldeans; then again to the Græco-Syrian kings; and even at the very moment when this indignant disclaimer was uttered, the signs of a foreign rule, of the domination of a stranger, everywhere met their eye. They bought and sold with Roman money; they paid tribute to a Roman emperor; a Roman governor sat in their judgment hall; a Roman garrison occupied the fortress of their city. And yet, with all this plain before their eyes, brought home to their daily, hourly, experience, they angrily put back the promise of Christ, "The truth shall make you free," as though it conveyed an insult: How sayest Thou, Ye shall be *made* free? We were never in bondage to any man.

3. These words of the Jews grew out of a total misunderstanding of the freedom of which Christ was speaking. It was not, in the first place, freedom from the yoke of the stranger, it was not deliverance from the tyranny of Rome, that Christ was promising here to as many as continued in His word, but freedom from the yoke of sin, deliverance from the bondage of corruption, from the tyranny of their own passions and desires. It was this that Christ promised, for it was this that He came from heaven to impart. That other freedom might and would follow in course of time; for men who are free inwardly are sure, sooner or later, to achieve an outer freedom as well. It was not, however, of this that Christ was speaking here, but of quite another freedom; and therefore, not caring to note that angry rejoinder of theirs, or to entangle Himself in controversy on so unprofitable a theme, but lifting up the whole question between Himself and them into a higher sphere, He replied, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." Every sinner, He would say, is the servant, or slave, of the sin which he commits—

is in bondage to it, and needs liberty, even the liberty which I, the Truth, alone am capable of giving him; which he can receive from no other hands save only from Mine. If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed; otherwise, you are slaves and servants, and such must continue to the end. The text, therefore, deals with—

I. The Need of Liberation.
II. The Truth that Liberates.
III. The Liberty that the Truth gives.

I.

The Need of Liberation.

Christ's aim was to make all men free. He saw around Him servitude in every form—man in slavery to man, and race to race; His own countrymen in bondage to the Romans—slaves of both Jewish and Roman masters, frightfully oppressed; men trembling before priestcraft; and those who were politically and ecclesiastically free, in worse bondage still—the rich and rulers slaves to their own passions. Conscious of His inward Deity and of His Father's intentions, He, without hurry, without the excitement which would mark the mere earthly Liberator, calmly said, "Ye shall be free."

1. First, then, we have to face this fact, that *we are in bondage.* —The Jews felt their political position acutely; they writhed under foreign dominion, and again and again broke out into rebellion, seeking an external freedom by casting off the hated Roman yoke. It was intolerable to them to be considered the slaves of Cæsar, and the most horrible scenes attended their several patriotic uprisings. The purpose of our Lord was to convince them of an underlying slavery, which accounted for their political servitude, and to confer upon them the spiritual liberty which contains the potency and promise of all freedoms. The essential slavery is interior; political coercion may imprison the body or intellectual error degrade the mind, but by far the most abject and fatal bondage is that of the soul under the dominion of ignorance, passion, and wilfulness.

(1) The *bondage of the mind* is one source and method of the

essential slavery, the bondage of the mind being the tyranny of materialism. Our Lord often speaks of sin as unbelief, unbelief in the spiritual universe—blindness to God, to the spirituality of the law, to the rewards and retributions of the life beyond; and this unbelief, blocking out the spiritual universe, leaves us slaves of the senses. We are caged in by the body, limited by the bars of circumstance, victims of the material, the worldly, and the temporal. The carnally-minded may fancy themselves possessed of a large liberty, but earth and time at their widest are narrow to the spirit. To be governed from below is the essential slavery. To obey only animal impulses, to seek sensuous pleasure, to hope for nothing beyond social promotion, to find our motive and end in earthly things, and, in a word, to surrender ourselves to the fatalism of circumstance, is an infinitely worse slavery than to be bound hand and foot. In this cruel bondage thousands live and die without one great thought, principle, or hope in their maimed and fettered life.

¶ A recent writer upon the London Zoological Gardens refers to "the spacious aviary" provided for the eagles. Spacious aviary! One would like to know what the eagles think of that. Surely the amplest artificial horizon is narrow and the loftiest dome mean to creatures born to range the skies and seek the sun. The noble birds must feel in dull, strange ways the loss of their native heaven; the most spacious aviary can only grievously and mysteriously fret them. So the world, and the things of the world, painfully cramp the creature in whose heart God has set eternity; his cage is narrow even when the stars are its gilded wires. It is said that a bird of the north, confined in a yard, and longing for his arctic haunts, has been known in spring to migrate from the southern to the northern side of his narrow confines. And, however men doom themselves to the straitened life of sense, the instinct of eternity pathetically asserts itself within absurd limits, and distracts the soul with morbid repinings.[1]

(2) The *bondage of the will* is another part of the essential slavery. All see what an awful tyranny sin is when it has once become the habit of life. Some kinds of sin are coarser, others less offensive, but thousands who have committed sin find themselves miserably incapable of shaking off its tyranny; they are victims of vanity, envy, covetousness, ambition, temper, im-

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Bane and the Antidote*, 228.

patience, or sensual indulgence, and they struggle unavailingly with the despotism which holds them down. He who unwittingly grasps the handles of an electrifying-machine soon writhes in pain and shrieks for deliverance. Why does he not let go the torturing thing? He cannot; he is at the mercy of the operator, and is the butt of the crowd. It is thus with multitudes who have committed sin: they are its slaves; they are astonished at themselves, ashamed of themselves, filled with grief and remorse, yet utterly unable to break the infernal spell. There is often more hope for the poor wretch agonizing in the tentacles of the devil-fish than there is for some of these victims of vice.

¶ In the Bay of Naples are several islands famous for their beauty. The sky of infinite depth and purity; the sea pure as the sky, and rivalling its manifold tints of ever-changing glory; the landscapes rich with the silver of the olive and the purple of the vine; the atmosphere full of the balm of flowers; and the horizon studded with picturesque spots, as a royal girdle with jewels, conspire to create a vision of delight. The Greek and Roman in their quest of loveliness and pleasure built their palaces here, and to this focus of colour and joy the modern lovers of beauty hasten as butterflies to roses. Now one of these fairy islands is the property of the Italian Government, and its only inhabitants are convicts. How little to them all this matchless scenery! Fettered, watched, driven, scourged, they can only be sickened by the splendour and irritated by the lavish treasures of earth and heaven. Is it not much like this with unregenerate man in regard to the blessings of life and the glory of the world?[1]

(3) The *bondage of the conscience* is part of the slavery of sin. Men are built in three storeys, so to speak. Down at the bottom, and to be kept there, are inclinations, passions, lust, desires, all which are but blind aimings after their appropriate satisfaction, without any question as to whether the satisfaction is right or wrong; and above that a dominant will which is meant to control, and above that a conscience. That is the pyramid; and as the sunshine illumines the gilded top of some spire, so the shining apex, the conscience, is illumined when the light of God falls upon it. The commission of sin defiles the conscience, and conscience degrades us into convicts and cowards. The sense of

[1] W. L. Watkinson, *The Bane and the Antidote*, 235.

dignity, freedom, and confidence is lost in the act of transgression, and with the consciousness of guilt comes fear and bondage. And is not life to the unregenerate man a harsh and gloomy servitude? We look upon God as "a hard Master." Is not that the natural conception of God? The heathen look upon Him in this light and represent Him by terrible images in their temples; and although we do not set up ghastly idols, our pessimistic conceptions of the world's Creator and Ruler are equally terrible. We think of Him, and are troubled. We look upon human duty as inequitable and exhausting, and fulfil our task with the discontent and bitterness of a slave. Finally, we look forward to the issues of life with deep misgiving. Through fear of death we are all our lifetime subject to bondage. At the bottom of all our pessimism, abjectness, and hopelessness is the consciousness of sin and guilt. Never did Shakespeare write a greater, deeper line than the one he puts into the mouth of Hamlet—"Thus conscience does make cowards of us all." The unintelligible wretchedness of human life and the vague terrors which haunt us are not in any wise mental in their origin and strength and to be abolished by fuller intellectual light; they arise in the accusing conscience, and here primarily must our bondage and cowardice be dealt with.

¶ The evils that we do, and that we cherish undone in our hearts, are like the wreckers on some stormy coast, who begin operations by taking the tongue out of the bell that hangs on the buoy, and putting out the light that beams from the beacon. Sin chokes conscience; and so the worse a man is, the less he feels himself to be bad; and while a saint will be tortured with agonies of remorse for some slight peccadillo, a brigand will add a murder or two to his list, and wipe his mouth and say, "I have done no harm." We are ignorant of our sins because we bribe our consciences, because we drug our consciences, and will not attend to the facts of our own spiritual being.[1]

2. The second thing that claims attention is that *we may be unconscious of our bondage.* This unconsciousness may be due to our never having consciously enjoyed freedom, or it may be due to the long time that has elapsed since we lost it, so that slavery has become a second nature.

(1) We may never have opened our hearts to the joy of being

[1] A. Maclaren.

free. There is nothing about us that is more remarkable and more awful than the power that we have, by not attending to something, of making that something practically non-existent. The great searchlights that they now have on battleships will fling a beam of terrible revealing power on one small segment of the vast circle of the sea; and all the rest, though it may be filled with the enemy's fleet, will be lying in darkness. So just because we will not think of the facts of our slavery to sin, the facts are non-existent as far as we are concerned. Surely it is not a thing worthy of a man never to go down into the deep places of his own heart and see the ugly things that coil and wrestle and swarm and multiply there.

¶ Ezekiel was once led to a place where, through a hole broken in the wall, there was shown him an inner chamber, on the walls of which were painted the hideous idols of the heathen. And there, in the presence of the foul shapes, stood venerable priests and official dignitaries of Israel, with their censers in their hands, and their backs to the oracle of God. There is a chamber like that in all our hearts; and it would be a great deal better that we should go down, through the hole in the wall, and see it than that we should live, as so many of us do, in this fool's paradise of ignorance of our own sin.[1]

(2) The unconsciousness may be due to the force of habit. A slave may be only all the more a slave that he is insensible to his bondage. There is no sense of bondage when the instincts of freedom are unrepressed; but neither is there any when despotism has lasted long enough to kill them out. A man's nature may have become so thoroughly habituated to slavery that he has ceased to know or think of anything better. On the other hand, the very consciousness of bondage is a kind of emancipation. He who has begun to know and feel the irksomeness of his limits, is already, in a sense, beyond them. There must be in him at least some measure of, and sympathy with, what transcends the bounds that hem him in, before he can feel them *as* bounds. Pain is the proof that vitality is not extinct. Shame is the witness that the soul is not utterly lost to goodness. And the blush on the slave's cheek and the sense of degradation in his heart are at least the sign that he is not *all* a slave.

[1] A. Maclaren.

¶ In the closing stanzas of that most graphic yet touching poem, "The Prisoner of Chillon," Byron well expresses the deadness of soul, the hopelessness, and even carelessness concerning life and freedom, begotten in those who have too long worn the chains of slavery. For the canker of such fetters eats more deeply into the soul than into the enchained limbs.

It might be months, or years, or days,
I kept no count, I took no note,
I had no hope my eyes to raise
And clear them of their dreary mote;
At last men came to set me free,
I asked not why, and reck'd not where,
It was at length the same to me,
Fetter'd or fetterless to be
I learn'd to love despair.
And thus when they appear'd at last,
And all my bonds aside were cast,
These heavy walls to me had grown
A hermitage—and all my own!
And half I felt as they were come
To tear me from a second home.

II.

The Truth that Liberates.

All truth gives freedom. We hardly need to prove this in the present day. We know that in every sphere ignorance is bondage, and knowledge is power. So sure are we of it that we fearlessly argue from effect to cause. That which fetters is not true, that which frees us and gives us power cannot be false.

1. The craving for liberty lies deep in human nature, and many means have been tried to satisfy it.

(1) *Force* has been tried. Wherever force has been used on the side of freedom we honour it; the names which we pronounce in boyhood with enthusiasm are those of the liberators of nations and the vindicators of liberty. Israel had had such—Joshua, the Judges, Judas Maccabæus. Had the Son of God willed so to come, even on human data the success was certain. Let us waive the truth of His inward Deity, of His miraculous power, of His power to summon to His will more than twelve legions of angels.

Let us only notice now that men's hearts were full of Him, ripe for revolt; and that at a single word of His, thrice three hundred thousand swords would have started from their scabbards. But had He so come, one nation might have gained liberty; not the race of man. Moreover, the liberty would only have been independence of a foreign conqueror. Therefore as a conquering king He did not come.

¶ Cromwell was strong that things obtained by force, though never so good in themselves, are both less to the ruler's honour and less likely to last. "What we gain in a free way is better than twice as much in a forced, and will be more truly ours and our posterity's"; and the safest test of any constitution is its acceptance by the people. And again, "It will be found an unjust and unwise jealousy to deprive a man of his natural liberty upon a supposition he may abuse it." The root of all external freedom is here.[1]

(2) *Legislation* has been tried. Perhaps only once has this been done successfully, and by a single effort. When the names of conquerors shall have been forgotten, and modern civilization shall have become obsolete, when England's shall be ancient history, one Act of hers will be remembered as a record of her greatness, that Act by which in costly sacrifice she emancipated her slaves. But one thing England could not do. She could give freedom, but she could not make fit for freedom, she could not make it lasting. The stroke of a monarch's pen will do the one, the discipline of ages is needed for the other. Give to-morrow a constitution to some feeble Eastern nation or a horde of savages, and in half a century they will be subjected again. Therefore the Son of Man did not come to free the world by legislation.

(3) *Civilization* has been tried. Civilization does free; intellect equalizes. Every step of civilization is a victory over some lower instinct. But civilization contains within itself the elements of a fresh servitude. Man conquers the powers of nature and becomes in turn their slave. The workman is in bondage to the machine which does his will; his hours, his wages, his personal habits are determined by it. The rich man fills his house with luxuries, and cannot do without them. A

[1] John Morley, *Oliver Cromwell*, 513.

highly civilized community is a very spectacle of servitude. Man is there, a slave to dress, to hours, to manners, to conventions, to etiquette. Things contrived to make his life more easy become his masters. Therefore Jesus did not talk of the progress of the species or the growth of civilization. He did not trust the world's hope of liberty to a right division of property. He freed the inner man, that so the outer might become free too. "Ye shall know the truth, and the *truth* shall make you free."

¶ If there were any doubt as to Christianity being truth, that complete freedom, which cannot be oppressed by anything, and which a man experiences the moment he makes the Christian life-conception his own, would be an undoubted proof of its truth.[1]

2. Only the Truth can make us free. We must be true in our attitude to ourselves and to our fellow-men.

(1) Of course the Truth meant is not mere information. In that sense, the wisest of men can know only a little; he has to content himself with being ignorant of all but a fraction of what is knowable. And, what is more important, true wisdom does not depend upon the extent of a man's information. There cannot indeed be wisdom without information, gathered from books and from communication with others; but such information is but the raw material out of which wisdom has to be extracted; and often a mind that is not possessed of any great store of knowledge, and whose experience is very limited, shows itself able to draw more light out of it than others who have had a wide intercourse with men and things.

(2) Nor, again, is the Truth referred to the holding of correct doctrines in theology, or in any other subject. It has been one of the most fatal mistakes to regard such correctness according to some standard of orthodoxy as the root of the matter, and to suppose that the one thing needful was, by whatever measures might be necessary—by violence or constraint, by hindering men from speaking and thinking freely, by narrowing their lives, and so preventing the natural action of their minds—to confine them to one set of opinions. Opinions, however right, are mere prejudices, unless they spring from a living root in our own experience and thought. We have many opinions which have come to

[1] Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (*Complete Works*, xx. 220).

us, we might almost say, in our sleep—by imitation of those around us, by the fact that we have heard things said and never heard them controverted, or at best, by a superficial exercise of our understanding upon first appearances. Such opinions therefore sit upon us very lightly, and we could part with them without much loss or change. We should not feel diminished, nor would our lives be essentially altered, if they were turned into their opposites.

(3) There is, however, a deeper kind of conviction than this, which is continually forming itself within every man, and constitutes for him the genuine result of his experience; a conviction as to the real meaning of his life in this world, what is most to be sought for, and what is most to be avoided, what he himself would wish to be, and what attitude he should take up in relation to his fellow-men; a conviction which may be said to constitute his real religion or to determine what he really worships. This conviction may not come readily to our lips, and indeed it often needs a kind of self-analysis, to which most men are very averse, to recognize it at all; yet it is continually shaping itself more and more definitely within us, and every act we do, and every serious thought we think, is a contribution to its growth. Every one is continually, by every action and thought, building up within him a true or a false view of his own nature and of the world, a view which puts him into a right or a wrong attitude to himself and to his fellow-men. Now, if we ask the secret of success or failure in this process, looking at conspicuous instances of either, what do we find? It is that success seems to depend upon a certain inward sincerity of soul, a willingness to apprehend the real facts of the case and to accept their lesson, upon a hatred of falsehood and illusion and a desire to stand in the clear light of day, and to understand the real meaning of the experience which life brings to us; while failure seems to be the result of a certain unwillingness to admit anything we do not like, a readiness to accept anything as true that flatters our desires, and an obstinate shutting of our ears to anything that opposes them.

¶ "O ye hypocrites," said Christ to the Pharisees, "ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" At first it seems hard that men should be con-

demned for not having insight enough to discern the signs of the times, that is, to see what were the really important circumstances in their surroundings and what was the line of conduct, of thought and action, which would make them useful to their day and generation. But the justice of the condemnation becomes evident when we realize that such want of discernment is due, not to merely intellectual limitations, but to that lack of truthfulness of soul which alone makes a man open to the inner meaning of the facts before him. In truth, men often go through life only half-awake, or seeing as in dreams only the pictures evoked by their own desires and feelings; and thus that which is most important in the experiences of their own lives is all but entirely lost to them.[1]

3. What, then, is the Truth which Christ says shall make us free? Truth is the vital law or principle of life. "If ye continue in my word . . . ye shall know the truth." Clearly, this sequence of ideas regards truth as the vital principle of life. It is not a theory, a calculation, an abstraction, a logical deduction, but a practical continuing in the word of life. When a man has discovered the word which fulfils his life he has found the very soul and essence of truth. In no other way can truth be found, in no other way can it be satisfactorily tested.

(1) The essential truth for the seed that is sown in the ground consists in the vital principle in virtue of which it germinates and unfolds its own proper life. By this principle it is distinguished from all the other products of the world, and receives its own charter of individual existence. The truth of the barley seed lies in that principle by which it unfolds its particular and distinctive qualities, and produces wholesome barley, and not something else. The truth of the rose tree is held in the principle which distinguishes it from all other flowering plants, and causes it to produce the beauty of the rose. Plainly enough, the truth of any and every plant does not consist in what botany discourses about them, but in the vital principle which gives them distinctive existence and perfection of life. The principle is, of course, as wide as creation. The essential truth for all created things lies in the potent principle in which they "live and move and have their being." In the

[1] E. Caird, *Lay Sermons Delivered at Balliol College*, 30.

last issue, universal truth is the eternal pulse of the life of God.

(2) The truth of intellect lies, therefore, not in any discoveries or theories of the human mind, but in the deeper laws by which the mind itself is constituted and developed. The things that are essential to mind, not the theories that are incidental to it, are its truth. The things that cannot be denied without contradicting the being of thought are indisputable truth. Among these are the ideas of order, arrangement, cause and effect, and universal relation.

(3) When we carry this principle into the province of the human spirit, we reach the deepest home of truth, the last word upon which all others depend, to which all others are subjugated, and in which all others are completed. The truth for the human spirit is that which is experienced and realized by it as the energy and satisfaction of its own life; that which, in flowing through its being, imparts inspiration, expansion, and potency. For example, the consciousness of an indwelling God, the pulse of a universal moral law, and the potencies of immortality, are vital elements of our spiritual nature, being essential to spiritual self-realization. The spirit of man cannot deny these without committing spiritual suicide. These are as fundamental a part of spiritual being as order and relation are of intellectual being. It is in spiritual life, and there alone, that the truth of the spirit can be tested and approved. The word of Jesus Christ answers this test; for it has been proved by man's spiritual nature to give life, and to give it abundantly. No arguments in the world can countervail a fact like this. As the principle of life for a tree constitutes the truth of that tree, so the proved principle of life for the spirit of man constitutes the truth for his spirit. In the word of Christ the vital principle of spiritual life is given in its perfect form; the indwelling God is invested with supreme glory, the consciousness of moral law is uplifted into its perfected grandeur, and the pulse of immortal life is flushed with the final energy of demonstration and revelation. In Jesus Christ the spiritual life of man has experienced a power and development unknown to it before. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." For the spirit (which is the only rightful judge), this proof is irrefragable,

for it lies in undeniable potencies of life. The question, "What is truth?" is satisfactorily answered. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

4. Christ is "the Truth," and His teaching, accepted by the will and expressed in the life, is the Truth that makes us free. The truth which He taught was chiefly on three points—

(1) *God.*—Blot out the thought of God, a Living Person, and life becomes mean, existence unmeaning, the universe dark, and resolve is left without a stay, aspiration and duty without a support. The Son exhibited God as Love: and so that fearful bondage of the mind to the necessity of Fate was broken. A living Lord had made the world; and its dark and unintelligible mystery meant good, not evil. He manifested Him as a Spirit; and if so, the only worship that could please Him must be a spirit's worship. Not by sacrifices is God pleased; nor by droned litanies and liturgies; nor by fawning and flattery: nor is His wrath bought off by blood. Thus was the chain of superstition rent asunder; for superstition is wrong views of God; exaggerated or inadequate, and wrong conceptions of the way to please Him.

(2) *Man.*—We are a mystery to ourselves. Go to any place where nations have brought together their wealth and their inventions, and before the victories of mind you stand in reverence. Then stop to look at the passing crowds who have attained that civilization. Think of their low aims, their mean lives, their conformation only a little higher than that of brute creatures, and a painful sense of degradation steals upon you. So great and yet so mean! And so of individuals. There is not one whose feelings have not been deeper than we can fathom, not one who would venture to tell out to his brother man the mean, base thoughts that have crossed his heart during a single hour. Now this riddle He solved. He looked on man as fallen, but magnificent in his ruin. We, catching that thought from Him, speak as He spoke. But none that were born of woman ever felt this or lived this like Him. Beneath the vilest outside He saw this—a human soul, capable of endless growth; and thence He treated with what for want of a better term we may call respect all who approached Him; not because they were titled Rabbis, or rich Pharisees, but because they were men. Here was a germ for freedom. It is not

the shackle on the wrist that constitutes the slave, but the loss of self-respect, to be treated as degraded till he feels degraded, to be subjected to the lash till he believes that he deserves the lash. And liberty is to suspect and yet reverence self, to suspect the tendency which leaves us ever on the brink of fall, to reverence that within us which is allied to God, redeemed by God the Son, and made a temple of the Holy Ghost.

(3) *Immortality.*—Christ taught that this life is not all; that it is only a miserable state of human infancy. He taught that in words, by His life, and by His Resurrection. This, again, was freedom. If there is a faith that cramps and enslaves the soul, it is the idea that this life is all. If there is one that expands, and elevates, it is the thought of immortality; and this is something quite distinct from the selfish desire of happiness. It is not to enjoy, but to *be* that we long for; to enter into more and higher life—a craving which we can part with only when we sink below Humanity, and forfeit it. This was the martyrs' strength. They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might attain a better resurrection. In that hope, and the knowledge of that truth, they were free from the fear of pain and death.

5. We must *know* the Truth. A servant may obey his master's will without any intelligent apprehension of its meaning, or sympathy with his intentions and aims. If he is sent on an errand, he may carry correctly the words of a message which he does not understand. He may go on a mission the nature of which is quite above his apprehension, simply following out certain precise directions without any discretionary power of action. He may construct, if he has mechanical skill, an elaborate piece of mechanism, simply working, bit by bit, according to the detailed plan or drawing placed before him. But suppose that by diligent study the workman's mind has become developed and his knowledge increased, so as to enable him to understand the principle and enter with intelligent appreciation into the idea of the thing; or even more than that, suppose advancing knowledge and culture have raised him generally into a capacity of sympathy and fellowship with the master's mind—then, in that case, though he might continue to obey the master's behests, there would be a complete change in the character of the work.

¶ Only then have I reached the deepest conviction, only then does faith stand on the impregnable rock of certitude, when I can say, "I know this to be the truth of God; its teaching has touched the deepest springs of thought and feeling within my breast, it has awakened my conscience, moved my heart, kindled my aspirations after a purer, better life, brought peace and rest to my spirit, and though a thousand authorities should contradict it, though Paul or an angel from heaven should teach another doctrine, I will not, cannot receive it."[1]

(1) To desire the truth is the beginning. We might almost call it the end as well. The desire, if it is genuine, will inevitably teach a man the true road to follow. For the genuine desire to see and hold the truth is bound up with the longing for excellence which our Lord calls the hunger and thirst after righteousness. "If any man willeth to do God's will," our Lord says, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." To desire to see the truth is one condition of seeing it; to will to do God's will is the other. The truth is revealed to those who are straining towards their Father in heaven. Heavenly aspirations, earnest desire for goodness, the face turned towards Christ, the desire ever to live by whatever within us is highest and best, the willing obedience to our own best thoughts, the cheerful, the glad resolution to do whatever shall seem to us kindest, truest, justest, purest, noblest—that is the life which opens the eyes, and, whenever God reveals any part of the excellence of His holiness, as He will assuredly reveal it to each man in fitting time, that is the life which catches the light, and that is the man whom the truth conducts to perfect freedom.

(2) The light of truth is, in some degree, like the light of heaven. It comes by God's ordinance for the most part, and not wholly by man's seeking. The pearl of great price was found by the man who was seeking goodly pearls. He sought for truth, and he found in the course of his search the one truth of all. But the treasure hid in a field was found by one who was not seeking at all. The truth was given in the course of God's Providence, and looked as if it came by chance.

¶ He accepted with his whole heart and soul the Christian representation of man as originally a child in the house of the

[1] John Caird, *University Sermons*, 206.

Infinite Father, who speaks truth to him in a voice he can recognize as His. This representation he was well aware rests upon two vast assumptions, 1st, that man actually knows God, and, 2nd, that he is able to recognize His voice. He always frankly admitted that he could not prove these positions, but he held them fast as the main support of his intellectual and moral life. He strongly held that man reaches highest truth only when God utters it to his soul by His Word and Spirit. Through learning and science we get subordinate truths; but through Divine teaching alone the highest truth. This conviction, which took full possession of him, produced a beautiful intellectual humility. No one ever imbibed more of the levelling spirit of the Gospel that calls the sage to sit beside the little child in the school of Christ.[1]

III.

The Liberty that Truth Gives.

The whole Bible is a book of liberty. It rings with liberty from beginning to end. Its great men are the men of liberty; and the Old Testament is the emancipator, leading forth out of imprisonment the people of God, who were to do the great work of God in the very much larger and freer life in which they were to live. The prophet and the psalmist are ever preaching and singing about liberty, the enfranchisement of the life of man. When we turn from the Old Testament to the New Testament, how absolutely clear that idea is! Christ is the very embodiment of human liberty. In His own personal life and in everything that He did and said, He was for ever uttering the great gospel that man, in order to become his completest, must become his freest; that what a man did when he entered into a new life was to open a new region in which new powers were to find their exercise, in which he was to be able to be and do things which he could not be and do in more restricted life.

1. What is Liberty? Try to give a definition of liberty, and it will be something of this kind: Liberty is the fullest opportunity for man to be and do the very best that is possible for him. There is no definition of liberty, that oldest and dearest phrase of men, and sometimes the vaguest also, except that. It has been perverted; it has been distorted and mystified, but that is what

[1] David Brown, *Memoir of John Duncan*, 381.

it really means—the fullest opportunity for a man to do and be the very best that is in his personal nature to do and to be. It immediately follows that everything which is necessary for the full realization of a man's life, even though it seems to have the character of restraint for a moment, is really a part of the process of his enfranchisement, is the bringing forth of him to a fuller liberty.

(1) Man thinks of every change that is to come to him as in the nature of denial of something that he is at the present doing and being, as the laying hold upon himself of some sort of restraint, bringing to him something which says: "I must not do the thing which I am doing. I must lay upon myself restraints, restrictions, commandments, and prohibitions. I must not let myself be the man that I am." The Old Testament comes before the New Testament, the law ringing from the mountain-top with the great denials, the great prohibitions, that come from the mouth of God. Thou shalt not do this, that, or the other. Thou shalt not murder. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's goods. That is the first conception which comes to a man of the way in which he is to enter upon a new life, of the way in which the denial in his experience is to take effect. It is as if the hands were stretched out in order that fetters might be placed upon them. The man says: "Let some power come that is to hinder me from being this thing that I am." And the whole notion is the notion of imprisonment, restraint.

So is it with all civilization. It is perfectly possible for us to represent civilization as compared with barbarism, as accepted by mankind, as a great mass of restrictions and prohibitions that have been laid upon human life, so that the freedom of life has been cast aside, and man has entered into a restricted, restrained, and imprisoned condition. So is it with every fulfilment of life. It is possible for a man always to represent it to himself as if it were the restriction, restraint, and prohibition of his life. The man passes onward into the fuller life which belongs to a man. He merges his selfishness in that richer life which is offered to human kind. He makes himself, instead of a single, selfish man, a man of family; and it is easy enough to consider that marriage and the family life bring immediately restraints and

prohibitions. The man may not have the freedom which he used to have. So all development of education, in the first place, offers itself to man, or seems to offer itself to man, as prohibition and imprisonment and restraint. There is no doubt truth is such an idea. We never lose sight of it. No other richer and fuller idea which we come to by and by ever does away with the thought that man's advance means prohibition and self-denial, that in order that man shall become the greater thing he must cease to be the poorer and smaller thing he has been.

¶ You capture a fish in the stream, and place it in a confining globe or bowl of water. You have taken away its liberty by restriction. But suppose that, instead of placing it in the globe, you fling it far away upon a far-stretching lea. You have not confined it. You have given it more free space than it had before. It was previously confined within the waters of the stream, but now all the wide world is an open space around it. Have you given it freedom? No; you have enslaved it by depriving it of its vital constraint. Within the constraint of the waters it flashed along joyously like a beam of light. On the open meadow, it gasps and writhes in pitiful helplessness and distress. It has lost its liberty in the lawlessness of licence. You have taken it out of those vital relations that controlled and perfected its activities.[1]

¶ In a lecture given at Woolwich, Ruskin recalled an incident of his early childhood which his mother was fond of telling him. "One evening when I was yet in my nurse's arms, I wanted to touch the tea-urn, which was boiling merrily. It was an early taste for bronzes, I suppose; but I was resolute about it. My mother bade me keep my fingers back; I insisted on putting them forward. My nurse would have taken me away from the urn, but my mother said—"Let him touch it, Nurse." So I touched it,—and that was my first lesson in the meaning of the word Liberty. It was the first piece of Liberty I got, and the last which for some time I asked for.[2]

(2) But when a man turns away from his sins and enters into energetic holiness, when a man sacrifices his own self-indulgence and goes forth a pure servant of his God and his fellow-men, there is only one cry in the whole gospel of that man, and that is the cry of freedom. As soon as I can catch that, as soon as I can feel about my friend, who has become a better man, that he

[1] J. Thomas. [2] E. T. Cook, *The Life of Ruskin*, i. 10.

has become a larger and not a smaller, a freer and not a more imprisoned man, as soon as I lift up my voice and say that the man is free, then I understand him more fully, and he becomes a revelation to me in the higher and richer life which is possible for me to live. The man puts aside some sinfulness. He breaks down the wall that has been shutting his soul out of its highest life. He has been a drunkard, and he becomes a sober man. He has been a cheat and becomes a faithful man. He has been a liar and becomes a truthful man. He has been a profligate, and he becomes a pure man. What has happened to that man? Shall he simply think of himself as one who has crushed this passion, shut down this part of his life? Shall he simply think of himself as one who has taken a course of self-denial? No. It is self-indulgence that a man has really entered upon. It is an indulgence of the deepest part of his own nature, not of his unreal nature. He has risen and shaken himself like a lion, so that the dust has fallen from his mane, and all the great range of that life which God gave him to live lies before him. This is the everlasting inspiration. This is the illumination.[1]

(3) It is no wonder that, if the negative, restricting, imprisoning conception of the new life is all that a man gets hold of, he should still linger on in the old life. For just as soon as the great world opens before him he is like a prisoner going out of the prison door—is there then no lingering? Does not the baser part of him cling to the old prison, to the ease and the provision for him, to the absence of anxiety and of energy? There can hardly be a prisoner who, with any leap of heart, goes out of the prison door, when his term is finished, and does not even look into that black horror where he has been living, or cast some lingering, longing look behind. He comes to the exigencies, to the demands of life, to the necessity of making himself once more a true man among his fellow-men. But does he stop? He comes forth, and if there be the soul of a man in him still, he enters into the new life with enthusiasm, and finds the new powers springing in him to their work.

¶ When I bring a flower out of the darkness and set it in the sun, and let the sunlight come streaming down upon it, and the flower knows the sunlight for which it was made and opens

[1] Phillips Brooks, *Addresses*, 82.

its fragrance and beauty; when I take a dark pebble and put it into the stream and let the silver water go coursing down over it and bringing forth the hidden colour that was in the bit of stone, opening the nature that is in them, the flower and the stone rejoice. I can almost hear them sing in the field and in the stream. What then? Shall not man bring his nature out into the fullest illumination, and surprise himself by the things that he might do?[1]

2. What is that Liberty which the Truth gives?

(1) Is it *political freedom*?—Christ's gospel did not promise political freedom, yet it gave it; more surely than conqueror, reformer, or patriot, that gospel will bring about a true liberty at last. And this, not by theories or by schemes of constitutions, but by the revelation of truths. God is a Spirit: man is His child—redeemed and sanctified. Before that spiritual equality, all distinctions between peer and peasant, monarch and labourer, privileged and unprivileged, vanish. A better man, or a wiser man than I, is in my presence, and I feel it a mockery to be reminded that I am his superior in rank. Let us hold that truth; let us never weary of proclaiming it: and the truth shall make us free at last.

(2) Is it *intellectual freedom*?—Slavery is that which cramps powers. The worst slavery is that which cramps the noblest powers. Worse therefore than he who manacles the hands and feet is he who puts fetters on the mind, and pretends to demand that men shall think, and believe, and feel thus and thus, because others so believed, and thought, and felt before. There is a tendency in the masses always to think—not what is true, but—what is respectable, correct, orthodox: we ask, Is that authorized? It comes partly from cowardice, partly from indolence, from habit, from imitation, from the uncertainty and darkness of all moral truths, and the dread of timid minds to plunge into the investigation of them. Now, truth known and believed respecting God and man, frees from this, by warning of individual responsibility. But responsibility is personal. It cannot be delegated to another, and thrown off upon a church. Before God, face to face, each soul must stand, to give account.

¶ We hear much about "free-thought"; but free-thought is

[1] Phillips Brooks, *Addresses*, 88.

realized only in Him who delivers from the illusions of time and matter, and persuades us of the real and abiding universe. He frees the understanding from the most fatal of errors. He opens our eyes that we may see; strikes from the soul the fetters of sense; cleanses our wings from the clogging bird-lime of earthliness; and for the first time we are free, gloriously free like the eagle "ringed round with the azure sky."[1]

(3) Is it *freedom of the will*?—It is not enough to define the liberty which Christ promises as freedom from sin. Many circumstances will exempt from sin which do not yet confer that liberty "where the Spirit of the Lord is." Childhood, paralysis, ill-health, the impotence of old age, may remove the capacity and even the desire for transgression: but the child, the paralytic, the old man, are not free through the Truth. Therefore, to this definition we must add, that one whom Christ liberates is free by his own will. It is not that he would, and cannot; it is that he can, and will not. Christian liberty is right will, sustained by love, and made firm by faith in Christ. Wherever a man would and cannot, there is servitude. He may be unable to control his expenditure, to rouse his indolence, to check his imagination. Well—he is not free. He may boast, as the Jews did, that he is Abraham's son, or any other great man's son; that he belongs to a free country; that he never was in bondage to any man; but free in the freedom of the Son he is not.

¶ An act is free when it is the expression of our own thought and will, when our own nature and our whole nature goes with it. If in what we do we are merely doing blindly another's bidding, following mechanically the directions laid down for us, we may be a useful tool, a convenient instrument of a master's purposes, but our work is not our own, but his; we are not free. To make us free, the work itself must constitute or contain the motive of our activity. The satisfaction or delight of doing it, and not any ulterior end or object, must be all in all to us. In the measure in which any other motive,—hope or fear, desire of honour or reward, dread of punishment or disgrace, nay, even a sense of duty or obligation,—interferes or intermingles with our activity, in that measure we are not free.[2]

¶ "A man," said Epictetus, is free only when "whatever is the will of God is his will too, and whatever is not God's will is

[1] W. L. Watkinson. [2] John Caird, *University Sermons*, 208.

not his will." This was a true definition of the highest freedom, provided that acceptance of the will of God is not a matter of necessity and submission merely, as it was with many of the Stoics. This would be the self-contradictory thing, freedom under compulsion. A man is truly free only when the will of God is not merely accepted, but loved and desired as that which is wholly good; when the love of God, of His Will, and of all that He is, becomes the active principle of the life. Then God's will is for the man not merely law but love and life. He has the will of God, as far as may be, as his will; in the highest sense possible to man he is one with God.[1]

(4) Is it *freedom of the conscience*?—Is it freedom of the inner self, carrying with it the fulness of moral freedom, and the superiority to all fears? Fear enslaves, courage liberates—and that always. Whatever a man intensely dreads, that brings him into bondage, if it be above the fear of God, and the reverence of duty. The apprehension of pain, the fear of death, the dread of the world's laugh, of poverty, and the loss of reputation enslave alike. From such fear Christ frees, and through the power of the truth. He who lives in the habitual contemplation of immortality cannot be in bondage to time or enslaved by transitory temptations. Do not say he *will* not; "he *cannot* sin," saith the Scripture, while that faith is living. He who feels his soul's dignity, knowing what he is and who, redeemed by God the Son, and freed by God the Spirit, cannot cringe, or pollute himself, or be mean. He who aspires to gaze undazzled on the intolerable brightness of that One before whom Israel veiled their faces, will scarcely quail before any earthly fear.

¶ Of truth, as well as of love, it may be said that there is no fear in truth, but perfect truth casteth out fear. The eye which is strong enough to pierce through the shadow of death is not troubled because the golden mist is dispelled and it looks on the open heaven.[2]

¶ A lady with whom he was slightly acquainted assailed him for "heterodox opinions," and menaced him with the consequence which in this world and the next would follow on the course of action he was pursuing. His only answer was, "I don't care." "Do you know what don't care came to, sir?" "Yes, madam," was the grave reply, "He was crucified on Calvary."[3]

[1] W. L. Walker, *The True Christ*, 27. [2] Benjamin Jowett.
[3] S. A. Brooke, *Life and Letters of F. W. Robertson*, 353.

Then he stood up, and trod to dust
Fear and desire, mistrust and trust,
  And dreams of bitter sleep and sweet,
  And bound for sandals on his feet
Knowledge and patience of what must
  And what things may be, in the heat
And cold of years that rot and rust
  And alter; and his spirit's meat
Was freedom, and his staff was wrought
Of strength, and his cloak woven of thought.

For what has he, whose will sees clear,
To do with doubt and faith and fear,
  Swift hopes, and slow despondencies?
  His heart is equal with the sea's
And with the sea-wind's, and his ear
  Is level with the speech of these,
And his soul communes and takes cheer
  With the actual earth's equalities,—
Air, light, and night, hills, winds, and streams,
And seeks not strength from strengthless dreams.[1]

(5) It is *the freedom of fellowship with God.*—Freedom is perfect harmony between our souls and God's law. Jesus is the truth that shows us God and gives us hearts to love Him; teaches us our relations to Him and enables us to live in harmony with those relations. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." The choice is before us—the bondage of Satan or the liberty of the sons of God; slaves of sin or freemen in Christ Jesus. No other choice is open to us. We cannot say, "I will be free, but not in Christ." We cannot free ourselves, else the Son would never have come to free us. We can be made free only by the truth as it is in Jesus.

"If *the Son* shall make you free." We can all admit that what the Son of the King does, He does with an authority and delegated power second only, if second, to the King Himself. But this is not all. This parallel will go only a very little way to meet the case. To the Christ, the crucified and risen Christ, and because He was crucified, the Father has committed the whole government of our world. This Son, the Son of God, became the Son of man, that He might do this very thing;

[1] Swinburne.

so that the word is doubly true and doubly emphatic, the Son, the Son of God, being the Son of man. "If *the Son* shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." It is all to be attributed to the promise of God's incarnate Son; there is no other way in which it can be accomplished.

¶ "Ye shall be free *indeed.*" It is a grand word, "indeed." It is very comforting in its simplicity; and it is a word for wonder—"indeed." There are many kinds of liberty, but not "indeed." There is the liberty of forgetfulness; there is the liberty of licentiousness; but "indeed" means so much behind it, "Ye shall be *free indeed.*"[1]

¶ "I was one of a party who visited Chatsworth the other day. We were allowed the privilege of going through the noble house. But our liberties were severely restricted. We were allowed to pass rapidly through what is called "the showrooms," but we were rigidly excluded from the "living-rooms." In many places there were red cords stretched across inviting passages, and our progress was barred. If I had been a son of the house, I could have passed into the living-rooms, the place of sweet and sacred fellowships, the home of genial intercourse, where secrets pass from lip to lip, and unspoken sentiments radiate from heart to heart."[2]

[1] J. Vaughan.

[2] J. H. Jowett, *British Weekly*, Dec. 29, 1910.

The Sinlessness of Christ.

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The Sinlessness of Christ.

Which of you convicteth me of sin?—John viii. 46.

It has sometimes been inferred from the context of these words that the word "sin" really means here intellectual rather than moral failure: "Which of you convicteth me of error? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" The second question is thus made to repeat its meaning into the translation of the first. But the word translated "sin" means moral failure throughout the New Testament; and our Lord is arguing from the genus to the species, from the absence of moral evil in Him generally to the absence of a specific form of moral evil, namely, falsehood. He is maintaining that as they cannot detect in Him any kind of sin, they ought not by their disbelief to credit Him practically with falsehood, or, at least, indifference to truth, and His own means of attaining and proclaiming it. It has also been thought that our Lord here only challenges the detective power of His Jewish opponents, and that He does not literally imply His sinlessness. But the challenge would hardly have been offered unless the Speaker had been conscious of something more than guiltlessness of public acts which might be pointed to as in some sense sinful. Sin, like holiness, is not merely a series of facts which may be measured and dated: it is a particular condition of the will, it is a moral atmosphere. It is more than the act and word; it is the attitude of the soul towards God and man. Sin dishonours God and lives for self rather than for others. Christ alone could say, "I honour my Father," "I seek not my own glory." The perfect life was based on a perfect motive.

Our Lord claims, then, to be sinless in a very different sense from that in which a man might defy an opponent to prove against him a specific form of wrongdoing in a court of law. We are here in the atmosphere not of law but of morality; and

morality is a question not of external facts merely, but of internal motives.

The question, "Could the Jews convict Christ of sin?" is but a part of the greater question, "Was Christ sinless?" We shall consider—

I. The Proof of Christ's Sinlessness.

II. The Value of Christ's Sinlessness for us.

I.

The Proof of Christ's Sinlessness.

1. *External evidence.*—All that we know about our Lord goes to show that He was sinless. This impression was produced most strongly on those who were brought into the closest contact with Him.

(1) The Apostolic writings clearly emphasize this remarkable feature of Christ's career—that it was without sin. "Who did no sin," is St. Peter's phrase about Christ. "Him who knew no sin," is the kindred expression of St. Paul. "In him is no sin," writes St. John in his First Epistle. "Without sin," is the similar description of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The important fact is that the New Testament writers were not unconscious of the extraordinary character of this "sinlessness" with which they credited Christ, or of the marked exception which it formed to the generally normal aspect of His life. It would not be true to say that the Synoptic portraiture of Christ is in the main supernatural. The "Son of man," as described by His biographers, is genuinely human, and moves easily among His contemporaries. There are supernatural elements in the records, no doubt, but they do not obliterate the historical figure of the Saviour, or destroy the generally normal aspect of His earthly course. Mystery there is in abundance, but the true manhood stands out always to view. It would be difficult to construct a juster summary of the Synoptic account of our Lord than that which is contained in the text: "We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Whatever else might be said of Him, this at

least must be said, that He was truly man. Only one invariable human trait is absent from the portrait they draw—there is no sin in Christ.

¶ The marks of passion, of weakness, of pride, of the love of popularity, and the consequent lack of moral courage, of a thousand infirmities of the flesh, some of which we notice in all other men, are certainly not obvious, or anywhere forced upon our recognition, in the life and conversation which is mirrored in the four Gospels. On the contrary, Jesus was not only followed and loved, but, by those who knew Him best, He was worshipped before He died.[1]

¶ Renan's Jesus is a charming Galilean with a certain sympathy for beautiful scenery and an affectionate tenderness for the peasants who follow him; but he is provoked to violence, impatience, base trickery, as soon as he finds his mission as a reformer unsuccessful. The Frenchman, bred amidst pious frauds, calls him the most delightful and wonderful of men, who practises innocent artifices, resorts to thaumaturgy unwillingly, but when he does resort to it is guilty of wilful imposture beside the grave of his friend. We in England should say he was a horrible liar and audacious blasphemer. We should pronounce the Jews right in the judgment which they passed upon him. To me the book is detestable, morally as well as theologically. It has brought to my mind, as I have said in my paper on it, that wonderful dream of Richter's in which Jesus tells the universe, "Children, you have no Father."[2]

(2) Christ's sinlessness is apparent in the attitude of His enemies towards Him. When Pilate repeatedly asked the priests, who were clamouring for His blood, "Why, what evil hath he done?" all the answer they could give (sufficient, no doubt, for their purpose) was, "We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." The impression of Christ's sinlessness is observable too in Pilate himself, who yielded to the wishes of Christ's enemies, while he admitted the innocence of their Victim; in the restless anxiety of the wife of Pilate, haunted in her dreams by the thought that the blood of "that just person" might be visited on her husband; in the lower sense of the pregnant declaration made by the centurion at the cross—"Truly this was the Son of God"; above all, in the remorse of Judas. Judas, who had known Christ as Peter had

[1] N. Smyth, *Old Faiths in New Light*, 94. [2] F. D. Maurice, *Life*, ii. 464.

known Him for three years of intimate companionship; Judas, who would gladly, had it been possible, have justified his treachery to himself by any flaw that he could dwell on in his Master's character, was forced to confess that the blood which he had betrayed was innocent. In the hatred of the Sanhedrists, as described particularly in St. John's Gospel, the purity and force of Christ's character is not less discernible. It is the high prerogative of goodness, as of truth, in their loftier forms, that they can never be approached in a spirit of neutrality or indifference; they must perforce create a decided repulsion when they do not decidedly attract. The Pharisees would have treated an opposing teacher, in whom any moral flaw was really discernible, with contemptuous indifference: the sinless Jesus of Nazareth provoked their irreconcilable, implacable hostility.

¶ Even the Pharisees betray the impression of a quite original and wonderful elevation. For though they regarded Him as a sinner and despiser of the law, from the viewpoint of their inherited moral and religious axioms, yet they could not stop short at this and view Him as an ordinary sinful man, or teacher of error. Rather He appeared to them, in the very estrangement in which they had placed themselves towards Him, so much one possessed of power (Matt. vii. 29; John vii. 46), so wonderfully firm, strong, and great of His kind, that they were obliged to attribute to Him a superhuman power of evil, after they had resolved not to concede to Him a superhuman power of good.[1]

(3) How does the matter stand to-day, as from our modern standpoint we examine the facts? The most exacting criticism of the documents has not disallowed the Apostolic belief. The New Testament, read in the light of honest criticism, justifies, so far as documents can justify, the Apostolic doctrine of the sinlessness of Christ. In bringing a human career lived out in the first century to be judged by the moral standard accepted in the twentieth we are applying a test the most severe imaginable. If we were judging a man in order to appraise his merits, this test were the unjustest in the world; but in the case of the Son of Man, it is not so much unjust as inevitable. He, whom we Christians worship as the Incarnate Creator, must be able to command the homage not of one age only, but of all ages. Let the moral

[1] Dorner, in *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, xi. 586.

standard of mankind be raised as high as you will, it must never rise above the standard of Christ; His standard must always be the goal towards which the moral effort of the race is moving, and never a single advance in goodness must be unable to find its interpretation and justification in the complete goodness of the Son of Man. Applying, therefore, necessarily our educated twentieth-century consciences to the historic Jesus, is He stripped of His attribute of sinlessness? Rationalists of the baser sort accumulate what they describe as immoral, or contradictory, or unreasonable teachings from the Gospels, but if we have the patience to examine their procedure we shall find that it violates every accepted canon of sound criticism and cautious interpretation. Fairly examined, honestly interpreted, the teaching of Christ commands the deliberate approval of the general conscience of our age. Not even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than "to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life."[1]

¶ What impression does He make on us? His portrait is before us in the Gospels and other New Testament writings; we can still follow His steps, hear Him speak, look into His eye, watch the development of His character, observe His behaviour under the most diverse and trying conditions, and test Him by all the standards we apply to our fellow-men. What is the result? He stands faultless and unique among men, severed from them by the whole diameter of perfection. We see Him grow through a beautiful infancy and childhood into maturity, and then live a life and display a character in which we can find no flaw. He is pure truth and trust, honesty and honour, righteousness and reverence, goodness and mercy and love, sympathy and service and sacrifice. No excess or defect, fault of omission or commission, evil disposition or temper, selfishness or sinister motive ever mars the splendid beauty of His perfection. He fulfils all human relations, passes through all experiences, is seen in joy and in sorrow, under the whips and stings of malice and in the agony of crucifixion, and yet He never loses His poise and balance or gives way to any ill-temper, but is always pure sweetness and light. It is true that He shows indignation, but only such as is the expression of righteous wrath. As we watch this Man, there is nothing we would add to Him or subtract from

[1] J. S. Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, 255.

Him, no criticism we would pass upon Him, no finishing touch we could give to Him, but we are lost in admiration of Him as the one perfect and most beautiful personality in all the world.[1]

2. *Christ Himself claims to be sinless.*—By what standard was He judging Himself? What was His conception of sin? How was it with His spiritual organs? Were they quick and sensitive, or were they sluggish and benumbed? What was the state of His moral consciousness? Before we can determine His claim to sinlessness these questions must be answered.

(1) Until this Man of Nazareth arose, sin had never been tracked to its roots. The analysis had often been attempted, but it had never proved conclusive and ultimate. Christ's analysis was an unveiling of its genesis. He probed behind ritual; He probed behind posture; He probed behind feeling; He probed behind thought, and His lance touched the innermost quick at the will. He pushed everything else aside as effects; He discovered the cause in the will. This was His uniqueness as a teacher. "Make the tree good, and the fruits will be good," and He addresses Himself to the regeneration of the roots. This Man, with the claim to sinlessness, unveiled the nature of sin and revealed its contents to the light as they had never been seen before.

(2) Christ's spiritual senses were far more finely perceptive than even the delicate organ of sight. Let us recognize how unspeakably refined His soul must have been to be capable of registering such exquisite distinctions. If a poor woman came near to Him in a spirit of faith, His soul thrilled with the presence, and He said, "Who touched me?" If doubt and suspicion drew near unto Him, His soul was chilled with the presence, and "he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." So refined and delicate was His spirit that He perceived evil thoughts that lay unexpressed in the hearts of those about Him. "He perceived the thought of their heart"; "He knew what was in man." His soul instinctively registered the presence of good and evil, just as a fine barometer registers the passing of a genial breeze or a chilling draught.

¶ In one constituted like Jesus, to be without the sense of sin

[1] J. H. Snowden, *The Basal Beliefs of Christianity*, 80.

was to be sinless, to be conscious of no disobedience was to have always obeyed.[1]

¶ An artist goes into a building and is troubled by it exceedingly; a thousand laymen are there, and are quite comfortable. The artist's eye instantly detects the false proportion, the line that is out of course, and his eye will turn to it; he may put very severe repressive restraints upon himself; he may make many a vow to be blind to the defect; but the trouble will come again and again upon him, because on that side of his life he is highly cultured, so much so as to be almost perfect. And by so much as any man is himself perfect, does he instantly detect what is defective and imperfect in other people.[2]

II.

The Value of Christ's Sinlessness for Us.

1. *Christ is our Ideal.*—The sinless Christ satisfies a deep want of the soul of man—the want of an ideal.

¶ No artist can attempt a painting, a statue, a building, without some ideal in view; and an ideal is not more necessary in art than in conduct. Each nation has its ideals; so has each city, each family, each profession, each school of thought; and how powerfully these energetic phantoms of the past control and modify the present is obvious to all who observe and think. There is no truer test of a man's character than the ideals which excite his genuine enthusiasm; there is no surer measure of what he will become than a real knowledge of what he heartily admires.[3]

¶ Just as there are two ways for indicating the road to a traveller, even thus there are two ways for moral guidance in the case of a man who is seeking the truth. One way consists in indicating to the man the objects which he will come across, and then he is guided by these objects. The other way consists in giving the man the direction by the compass, which he is carrying with him, and on which he observes the one immutable direction, and, consequently, every deflection from it. The first way of moral guidance is the way of external definitions, of rules: man is given definite tokens of acts which he must perform and which not. "Observe the Sabbath, be circumcised, do not steal, drink no intoxicating drink, kill no living being, give the tithe to the

[1] A. M. Fairbairn, *Studies in the Life of Christ*, 61.
[2] J. Parker. [3] H. P. Liddon.

poor, make your ablutions, and pray five times a day," and so forth,—such are the injunctions of external religious teachings,—of the Brahmanical, Buddhistic, Mohammedan, Hebrew, and the ecclesiastic, falsely called Christian. The other way is to indicate to man unattainable perfection, the striving after which man is cognizant of; man has pointed out to him the ideal, in relation to which he is at any time able to see the degree of his divergence from it. "Love God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.—Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Such is the teaching of Christ.[1]

Whate'er thou'st won, remaineth still much more;
Heaven hath abundance yet for thee in store;
Still glows the grand Ideal on before!—

Which all thy best achievements doth degrade,
Thy boasted virtues dwarfs, and makes to fade,
Yea pass into complete eclipse and shade.

Ev'n he who such high eminence had gained
Yet counted not that aught was yet attained,
But onward to the goal with ardour strained,—

Reckoning his reach but as the starting-place,
Whence to pursue the spirit's boundless race;
Of life's grand edifice but laid the base.

E'en saints on high with heavenly honours crowned
Their crowns of glory cast upon the ground,
Not otherwise loyal and faultless found.

Great is the goal, the guerdon 'fore thee set,
No self-complacence must thy progress let,
Press boldly on, the things behind forget;
Part with thy past, let go![2]

(1) Humble penitence grows in the life of a saint. How is it, then, that with our Lord the very reverse is the case? How is it that He is absolutely unconscious of any shortcoming or sin? Why is there not a vestige of personal penitence in any word of Christ's? Why is He absolutely satisfied as He contemplates Himself? How is it that the possibility of sinning, or failing to do God's will, never enters His mind? A good person is full of regrets,

[1] Tolstoy, *Epilogue to the Kreutzer Sonata* (*Complete Works*, xviii. 426).
[2] William Hall.

always discontented because he knows he is still far off from his ideal. Why does our Lord never express any such regret? How is He so sublimely conscious that His ideal is reached, or rather that He has never been for one moment separated from its realization? There is practically no answer to these questions but this—He is Himself the ideal that man is reaching after.

¶ Scripture is a succession of saintly biographies all upon one type, the penitential. By a sudden transition there springs up one solitary instance of a completely opposite type, which vanishes, and never reappears. But the solitary and insulated unpenitential type makes also a solitary assumption of worth, and the assumption is part of the portrait.[1]

¶ If you want to find those who have the keenest sense of sin, you will not find them among the reprobates or among the newly repentant, but among the experienced and maturing saints. It is at the beginning of the Christian life, when the great heights of holiness are still to climb, that the sense of sin and of unworthiness is most imperfectly developed. It is growth in grace that deepens the consciousness of the blackness of personal sin and that makes confession of sin the painful wail of the soul. And so it is among the holy ones that you hear the most heart-sick expressions of sin. Here is John, the mystic of the twelve, fitted by his refinement of spirit to lean on the Master's breast, and catch the soft whispers of the deeper things; and yet, from this man, there come the words, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Here is Paul, of masculine mind and of childlike heart, abounding in labours, persistent in sacrifice; and yet in old age, when the veil was almost transparent, he writes to his beloved Timothy, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; *of whom I am chief*." Here is John Bunyan, whose intimacy with the ways of the Almighty passed far beyond the human ken; brave, lowly, saintly, and yet his writings abound in agonizing confession of personal unworthiness and sin. And here is one of the saints of our own time, the holy Andrew Bonar, whose long life was like an unbroken beam of the Eternal light; and yet to the very week of his death his diary abounds in expressions of unworthiness and the pained confession of personal sin. These are the common characteristics of the lowly saints.[2]

(2) The sinlessness of Jesus deepens the conviction of our own sinfulness. We no longer judge ourselves by law, or convict our-

[1] J. B. Mozley, in *Contemporary Review*, vii. 495.

[2] J. H. Jowett, in *The Examiner*, March 26, 1903, p. 300.

selves at the bar of conscience; His life is our law, and He is our conscience, and from Him comes our fullest and most convincing condemnation. But we feel sin as men could not feel it before Christ came. Fear has deepened into pathos, and penitence into the tenderest contrition, because although He was the sinless One, yet He was the suffering One—"For our sins and for our salvation." Sinless, Christ has filled men's hearts with a profounder sense of sin than even the saintliest men of old ever knew or felt. To the best of men life has become one long season of Lent—a season of penitence because the vision of His life and the vision of His Cross are ever with us. "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" has become not only His defence but our condemnation.

¶ For myself, it is only since His Divine image rose before my soul that I have properly learned what is the true state of man. Previously, I always measured myself with the little, and so appeared in my own eyes to be great. Now I measure myself with Him, and have become very little indeed.[1]

¶ Sin began in man with the dawn of the ideal. It was with the infancy of the race as with the individual infant; which, born a mere bundle of sensations and appetites, arrives gradually at moralhood, where it can sin, and does. A perception of sin, we say, is an element of moral progress. There are no shadows where there is no light.[2]

Drop, drop, slow tears,
  And bathe those beauteous feet,
Which brought from heaven
  The news and Prince of peace:
Cease not, wet eyes,
  His mercies to entreat;
To cry for vengeance
  Sin doth never cease:
In your deep floods
  Drown all my faults and fears;
Nor let his eye
  See sin, but through my tears.[3]

2. *Christ is our Example.*—A difficulty arises here in connection with the sinlessness of our Lord which has troubled some people. "How," they say, "can He be our example if He could

[1] A. Tholuck, *Hours of Christian Devotion*, 31.
[2] J. Brierley, *Life and the Ideal*, 40.
[3] P. Fletcher.

not sin? We are sinners. He is sinless. Is it of any avail to say to us, Be like Jesus Christ? We cannot be like Him, just because He is without sin and we are not." Now, it is quite true that on the face of it to imitate Christ as we are is an impossibility. And, in fact, He never did preach Himself simply as an example apart from other claims that He made. He did not merely live a human life of perfect goodness and then say, "Be like me." We must take what He said about following Him in connection with all the rest of His claim and His work. He did realize the ideal human life, but He also offered a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, and promised to give us of His Spirit whereby we can be made partakers of His holy human Nature. His first appeal to us is to believe on Him, that is, to entrust our lives to Him as God and Man. It is "Come unto me" first, and then "Learn of me." It is only the man who has first handed over his life into the keeping of Christ, who has accepted His atoning work, who seeks His Spirit, who can really, with any likelihood of success, imitate the example of Jesus. It is only to the believer, pardoned by the sacrifice of Christ, filled with the transforming power of the life of Christ, that Christ is an example of conduct.

¶ It is a false supposition that the ideal of infinite perfection cannot be a guidance for life, and that, looking at it, it is necessary to dismiss it with a motion of the hand, saying that it is useless to me because I can never attain it, or to degrade the ideal to the level on which my weakness wants to stand. To reflect in this manner is the same as though a navigator should say: "Since I cannot go in the direction indicated by the compass, I shall throw away the compass or cease looking at it, that is, I will abandon the ideal or will fasten the needle of the compass to the place which at a given moment will correspond to the direction of my vessel, that is, I will degrade the ideal in accordance with my weakness."

The ideal of perfection which Christ has given us is not a dream or a subject for rhetorical sermons, but a most necessary, most accessible guide of moral life for man, just as the compass is a necessary and accessible implement guiding the navigator; all that is necessary is to believe in the one as in the other. In whatever situation a man may be, the teaching about the ideal, given by Christ, is sufficient in order to obtain the safest indication of those acts which one may and which one may not perform. But it is necessary completely to believe in this teaching, this one

teaching, and to stop believing in any other, just as it is necessary for the navigator to believe in the compass, and to stop looking at and being guided by what he sees on both sides. One must know how to be guided by the Christian teaching, how to be guided by the compass, and for this it is most important to understand one's position, and to be able not to be afraid precisely to indicate one's own deflection from the one, ideal direction. No matter on what round man may stand, there is always a possibility of his approaching this ideal, and no position of his can be such that he should be able to say that he has attained it and no longer can strive after a greater approximation.[1]

3. *Christ is the Reconciler between God and man.*—Christ's sinlessness affects the value of His sacrifice. The sinbearer, as all the types of the Mosaic law prefigured, must be himself sinless—"a lamb without blemish and without spot." The eternal, immutable, inevitable law of God claims an entire fulfilment. Who is to fulfil it? One has said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Did He do it, or did He not? He twice says of Himself that He did do it; and at the supreme moments of His life. Once in His High Priest's prayer, after the Paschal supper—"I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Once, just before He died—"It is finished."

¶ Let us conceive (if we may without irreverence) that some one single sin, untruthfulness, or vanity, or cruelty, could be really charged on Him, and what becomes of the atoning character of His Death? How is it conceivable that He should even have willed to die for a guilty world? For while, if we look at it on one side, His death appears to have been determined by circumstances, on the other, it was as certainly the result of His own liberty of action. "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." At once Priest and Sacrifice, Christ is represented in the Epistle to the Hebrews as "offering himself without spot to God." It was the crowning act of a life which was throughout sacrificial; but had He been conscious of any inward stain, how could He have desired to offer Himself in sacrifice to free a world from sin? Had there been in Him any personal evil to purge away, His Death might have been endured on account of His own guilt: it is His absolute Sinlessness that makes it certain that He died for others.[2]

[1] Tolstoy, *Epilogue to the Kreutzer Sonata* (*Works*, xviii. 431).

[2] H. P. Liddon, *Passiontide Sermons*, 14.

A Time to Work.

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A Time to Work.

We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.—John ix. 4.

These words were drawn from Jesus Christ by a remarkable question addressed to Him by His disciples. Our Saviour's attention had been arrested by the sad but familiar spectacle of a blind beggar. We may reasonably infer from the Evangelist's account that this afflicted man's case was notorious. He was "blind from his birth." Thus he presented to view in its most pathetic because its least disciplinary shape the very common, but not on that account more tolerable, phenomenon of physical affliction. This, then, was the occasion of the remarkable inquiry on the part of Christ's disciples: "Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?" From the point of view of Jewish monotheism, suffering appeared to be in all cases the consequence of sin. But the difficulty was how to apply this principle to the present case. The only two alternatives presented to their minds, and indicated by the question of the disciples, viz. that either his own sin or that of his parents was the cause of his misfortune, seemed equally inadmissible.

The context sufficiently explains our Lord's reply. He does not deny the existence of sin either in this man or in his parents; but neither does He recognize the necessity of any moral connection between this individual or family sin and the blindness with which the unfortunate man was visited. Individual suffering is not often connected, except in a very general manner, with the collective sin of humanity. Hence it gives us no right to judge those who suffer, but only furnishes a summons to fulfil a Divine mission towards them by assisting them. As truly as evil exists in the world, so truly has God His work on earth; and His work consists in finding matter for good in evil itself. Hence

all the acts by which we concur in the accomplishment of this Divine purpose are called "the works of God." But this word is here applied more specially to acts which bear the seal of Divine Omnipotence, such as the physical cure of the blind man, and his spiritual illumination. The call to heal this unhappy one had made itself felt in the Lord's heart at the very moment when His eyes beheld him, and it was with this feeling that He fixed them upon him. Jesus seeks to make His disciples share with Him the point of view from which He regards suffering, by applying it to His personal task during His sojourn on earth.

I.

We Must Work.

1. *Christ felt this necessity.*—With Christ it was not, "I may if I will"; not, "I can if I like"; not the mere possibility and the mere potentiality of work, but an imperious necessity—"I *must*." He could not help Himself. If we may use such words concerning One who was none the less Divine that He was human, He was under restraint; He was bound; He was compelled. The cords which bound Him, however, were the cords of His Deity. They were the cords of love which bound Him who is love. "I must work." It was because He loved the sons of men so well that He could not sit still and see them perish. He could not come down from heaven and stand here robed in our mortal flesh, and be an impassive, careless, loitering spectator of so much evil, so much misery. His heart beat high with desire. He thirsted to be doing good, and His greatest and grandest act, His sacrifice of Himself, was a baptism with which He had to be baptized, and He was straitened until it was accomplished.

¶ What a friend Necessity is! It stops our standing on one foot; it ends our looking at our watches, and wondering about three or four things; it moves the previous question; it says, "This one thing you do!" It is good discipline to conquer indecision, but it is better for us and for the world, knowing "what must be," to be about it. It saves time. Goethe spoke of the "dear must." Emerson calls a man's task his life-preserver. Let us recognize the purpose of God in the inevitable, and accept it gracefully, whether discipline or duty. Swift adjustment

means peace and power. Necessity will then be but the iron band inside the golden crown.[1]

2. *As Christ's followers, this necessity is ours.*—"*We* must work." Christ associates His disciples with Himself in His Divine enterprise of mercy. They, too, are commissioned to "destroy the works of the devil," and the range of their activity must be co-extensive with their Lord's. Physical suffering, and all that makes for physical suffering—unjust conditions of living, insanitary dwellings, inadequate and misdirected education, harsh and unequal laws, oppressive social conventions—all the perennial springs of human misery and disgrace are within the sphere of that redemptive mission which was Christ's in Palestine nearly two millenniums ago, and is Christ's still, wherever His true disciples are found. Has He not identified Himself with them, clothing them with the authority of His own person? "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me." "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day." The exemplary worth of Christ's conduct follows from this identity of His mission with ours, and the abiding importance of the Gospel but reflects the conviction of men that in the life therein recorded they can learn their own practical obligations.

¶ The work which Christ appeals to us to do is not left to our single-handed weakness or timidity. We are sustained by the example and the co-operation of a goodly fellowship, the goodliest and mightiest fellowship that ever banded together to cheer a fainting soul; no less a fellowship than God and Christ and all things. "For my Father worketh even until now," said Jesus—no night for Him—"and I work," and "all things," said His Apostle, "work together." Was ever band of workers like this: God, His Son, and all His universe, working for ever, working together, for good? Should the thought of that magnificent, harmonious fellowship, whose work is from everlasting to everlasting, marching triumphantly on through the generations, not brace the weakest will, strengthen the faintest heart, nerve the slackest hands of men whose day at the longest is short and rounded with a sleep? So Christ's appeal is charged with all the forces of heaven and of earth, when He says, "We"—not I, as the Authorized Version has it—"we must work the works of him that sent me." We—for He is not ashamed to call us brethren; and we, His brethren, *must* work. The Divine necessity lies upon

[1] M. D. Babcock, *Thoughts for Every-Day Living*, 40.

men whose hearts can be touched by an appeal of Christ, and by the weird power of the night that is coming to bring to an end all the work of the day, be it never so faithful and never so earnest.[1]

3. *God has appointed a work for each and all.*—Vain are the complaints so often made, that we have no distinct work in life appointed for us; that we stand idle because we have not been called into the vineyard to labour. God has made duties for us, and placed us in the midst of them, just as He has made light for the eyes, and air for us to breathe. There is not an action of our life that may not become an act of worship, if it is consecrated by the love of God in the heart of the doer. But the common round of our common daily life is full of occasions of Christian duty. Who is he that stands idle because he is not hired? One it must be who can find neither poverty, nor ignorance, nor wickedness at his hand; who cannot influence one person by the Christian tone of his own life; who cannot sweeten the daily life of his home with kindness; who never comes near a sinner rushing headlong to his ruin; who cannot even find a child to encourage in struggling with an evil temper, or a stricken heart to be consoled by a word of sympathy.

¶ In the summer vacation of 1856 I remained behind for a few days. A message came from Royston that there was a German woman dying there who could not speak English, and was a Catholic. They asked if anybody could go to her from the College. Dr. Vaughan, who spoke German, at once volunteered to go. He asked me to go with him, and I drove him to Royston, which was thirteen miles from the College. In was in the month of July, and I remember it was a very hot drive. He found the poor woman alive, heard her confession, and gave her the Last Sacraments. I believe she died the next day. Some forty years afterwards, on my recalling this to his memory, he said, "Ah yes; I remember it well, and I have often quoted it as an instance that we never know how anything we learn may be turned to God's account. He has His own design in prompting us to acquire, say, a language, and I have often cited this example of my visit to that poor German woman as an illustration of this, for it was the only occasion in my whole life that I ever had any practical need of the German language. I have no doubt that God inspired me to study German for the sake of that poor woman's salvation."[2]

[1] J. E. McFadyen, *The Divine Pursuit*, 155.

[2] Mgr. Fenton, in *The Life of Cardinal Vaughan*, i. 91.

Lord, send us forth among Thy fields to work!
Shall we for words and names contending be,
Or lift our garments from the dust we see,
And all the noonday heat and burden shirk?
The fields are white for harvest, shall we stay
To find a bed of roses for the night,
And watch the far-off cloud that comes to sight,
Lest it should burst in showers upon our way?
Fling off, my soul, thy grasping self, and view
With generous ardour all thy brothers' need;
Fling off thy thoughts of golden ease, and weed
A corner of thy Master's vineyard too.
The harvest of the world is great indeed,
O Jesus! and the labourers are few.[1]

II.

How We must Work.

1. *It must be God's work.*—Much has been said in these days as to work. Some of the most piercing and emphatic voices which the century has heard have made work the keynote of their message, proclaiming it as at once the end of man's being and the gospel of his deliverance. So far, there is no fault to be found with them, for anything that will wake men and shame men out of idleness must be good. But, after all, work for the mere work's sake is a doubtful evangel to preach. It is true that inactivity has its sins, but it is true that work has its own sins also. There are those who work till their work carnalizes them, and their being becomes sense-bound and earth-bound, dense as the clods that they break in their fields, mechanical as the wheels that they turn in their mills, shrivelled as the parchments that they study in their office-rooms. No, there is nothing that is necessarily elevating, nothing that is necessarily purifying, nothing that is necessarily acceptable, in work. Work may be done that is wrong work; work that is right may be wrongly done; and the only reception for which the workman is toiling may be this: "Unfaithful and unprofitable servant, who hath required these things at thy hand?" But here is a text for the labourer, both defining the scope of his tasks and ennobling and sanctifying

[1] Martha Perry Lowe.

their nature: "I must work the works of him that sent me." That is, "What I do, I will do because God has assigned it, and I will do it, too, because God will therein be glorified, His character unfolded, His purpose proclaimed, and His gospel adorned among men." And with that as our great guiding principle we have all that we need. It contains the secret of labour's redemption, it yields the germ and the pledge of labour's reward.

¶ It may be questioned whether any work of fiction ever produced so tangible an effect as the impetus which *Uncle Tom's Cabin* gave to the destruction of American slavery. The author's account of the matter was characteristically simple: "I did not write it; God wrote it."[1]

¶ I too could now say to myself: Be no longer a Chaos, but a World, or even Worldkin. Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it, then. Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called To-day; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work.[2]

2. *To do God's work we must have received His Spirit.*—We cannot do God's works unless we have received His Spirit and accepted His will as the law of our lives so as to have become fellow-workers with Him. It is only those who surrender their hearts in faith and love to God, only those in whose souls God savingly works by His Holy Spirit, who can truly labour in God's service. Otherwise than through regeneration there is no possibility of becoming one of His workmen. His works are spiritual works which can be performed only by spiritual men. If we have not repented of our sins and turned from them to God; if we have not believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; if we have not come under the influence of the Holy Spirit; then, no matter how diligently and strenuously we may toil, or how useful our exertions may seem to ourselves or others, the works we do are not the works which God would have us to do, for they are not done in dependence on His Spirit.

[1] G. W. E. Russell, *Afterthoughts*, 70.

[2] Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, bk. ii. ch. x.

III.

When We must Work.

1. *Christ's interpretation of the "day."*—Christ uses the language of urgency. His Divine mission must be fulfilled in the brief space of His "*day*" of opportunity, or not fulfilled at all. We gain a glimpse of our Lord's view of His own career. He, like all His brethren, worked under the hard conditions of risk and uncertainty. His "*day*" was a short one. The life of Jesus in the world had ended when most human lives may be said to be but beginning. It is, indeed, true that His earthly career is but an episode in His warfare against evil, but it is no less true that it is the supreme episode on which hung the issue of men's redemption. After the Passion the conditions of Christ's life changed; there was no longer any opportunity for the performance of those works by which, in terms of human experience, the character of the unseen, unknown Father might be discovered to human view. The life of Christ constitutes the revelation of God, and that revelation is adequate and faithful as that life is perfect.

¶ This image partially finds place in the "Sayings of the Jewish Fathers": R. Tarphon said, "The day is short, and the task is great, and the workmen are sluggish, and the reward is much, and the Master of the house is urgent."

2. *The brevity and uncertainty of life.*—"The day is short." When another year has gone into the dead past beyond our recall for ever, when we look back and think how rapidly, and, it may be, how unprofitably, it has glided away, the impression of this truth may be vivid upon us; but we seldom feel it as we ought. It is not useless admonition that Scripture gives us when it insists so often on life's brevity, comparing human existence to the most fleeting things in nature; to the mist which disappears before the sun, to the cloud driven by the winds, to the shadows that flit across the landscape, to the smoke that ascends and mingles with the atmosphere, to the leaf of the forest tree, and to the flower of the field. It cannot be compared to any of the more stable objects of nature. How many generations of men has the earth successively borne on her bosom; on how many generations have the sun and the moon looked down! There is

many a tree still fresh and vigorous, although the hands that planted it have for centuries been dust. Man is far more fragile even than many of his own works. From the pyramids of Egypt more than "forty centuries look down upon us"; but where are the builders?

The day of our life is as uncertain as it is short. It is a day in which there is often no gradual fading away of the light to warn us that it is drawing near to a close. It is often with man's life as with countries in other zones than ours, where night, instead of climbing gradually up the heavens and giving evidence of its approach by an ever-deepening twilight, overspreads it at once and envelops all living creatures in sudden darkness. In the course we have to run there is no point, however near the one from which we started, where our race may not terminate. In the whole period of life usually allotted to man there is no year, month, week, day, or even instant, but it may be the last to each individual. There is no truth of which we are more frequently or strikingly reminded.

¶ Have you measured and mapped out this short life and its possibilities? Do you know, if you read this, that you cannot read that—that what you lose to-day you cannot gain to-morrow?[1]

¶ It is not merely of the literal shortness of our time, or the possible nearness of death, that our Lord's words should set us thinking, when He warns us that we must work while it is day. If we measure our life by the things we should accomplish in it, by the character it should attain to, by the purposes that should be bearing fruit in it, and not by mere lapse of time, we soon come to feel how very short it is, and the sense of present duty grows imperative. It is thus that the thoughtful man looks at his life; and he feels that there is no such thing as length of days which he can without blame live carelessly, because in these careless days critical opportunities will have slipped away irrecoverably; he will have drifted in his carelessness past some turning-point which he will not see again, and have missed the so-called chances that come no more.[2]

¶ I have long said: "The night cometh," etc., but that does not make it right to act in a hurry. Better not do a thing than do it badly. I must be patient and wait on God. If it is His

[1] Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (*Works*, xviii. 62).
[2] Bishop Percival, *Sermons at Rugby*, 27.

Will I should do more He will give me time. I am not serving Him by blundering.[1]

Our life is long. Not so, wise Angels say
Who watch us waste it, trembling while they weigh
Against eternity one squandered day.

Our life is long. Not so, the Saints protest,
Filled full of consolation and of rest;
"Short ill, long good, one long unending best."

Our life is long. Christ's word sounds different:
"Night cometh; no more work when day is spent."
Repent and work to-day, work and repent.

Lord, make us like Thy Host, who day nor night
Rest not from adoration, their delight,
Crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" in the height.

Lord, make us like Thy Saints, who wait and long
Contented: bound in hope and freed from wrong,
They speed (may be) their vigil with a song.

Lord, make us like Thyself: for thirty-three
Slow years of toil seemed not too long for Thee,
That where Thou art, there Thy Beloved might be.

(1) *The need for diligence.*—We ought to be misers of our time and opportunities. If Jesus Christ said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh," some of us ought very specially to say it, and to feel it, because the hour when we shall have to lay down our tools is coming very near, and the shadows are lengthening. If you had been in the fields in these summer evenings during the last few days, you would have seen the haymakers at work with more and more diligence as the evening drew on darker and darker. Some of us are at the eleventh hour. Let us fill it with diligent work.[2]

¶ When he was urged to desist and take rest his favourite expression was, "No, I will never be a loafer. If there are no meetings to be addressed, I will return to my work in Australia and the Islands." "You tell me I am working too hard," he would say, "but my time to work for Jesus cannot be long now. I only wish I could press three times the quantity of work for Him into

[1] Newman, in Wilfrid Ward's *Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman*, ii. 126.
[2] A. Maclaren.

each day, resting on His promise for the needed help: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end.'"[1]

(2) *Postponement of duty is loss.*—Postponement of the obvious duty means irretrievable loss and inevitable incompleteness when the day is done. Our Lord's more immediate meaning would seem to be that the work and the moment are so adjusted that what is missed at one time cannot be made up at another. Not only does the day bring its task, but every separate hour has its appointed portion of the work. So that if the work of the third hour be missed, there is no time in which to do it. Each subsequent hour brings its own responsibility, and there is no room for any work that does not belong to that hour. The work of the passing moment must be done in it, or remain for ever undone. This is a law of life that will be acknowledged the moment it is mentioned, and yet we are apt to grow strangely indifferent to it. But consider what it means. The omission of this moment tells upon the work of the next. One stone is left out, and the wall shakes for the want of it. A word is left out of the sentence, and the sense of it is thereby obscured. An exercise is skipped in the lesson, and the examination is rendered unsatisfactory. Christ's work was cumulative, and every step in the staircase was fitted in its place. So must it be with us if we would be prime and perfect workmen.

¶ Sins of commission are the usual punishment for sins of omission. He that leaves a duty, may well fear that he will be left to commit a crime.[2]

¶ I should have said your letter delighted me, but for the news you gave me of D——'s death. . . . My dear, it is awful; not that death is awful or even to be regretted, but I could have borne with more composure the news of the death of my most intimate friend. Learn from me what I never so fully realized before, the self-reproach that follows upon the omission of duty. I am most deeply grieved when I think that D——'s appearance, manners, peculiarities, stood in my way of doing what I might have done: time after time I have thought of his real merits, of his honesty, integrity, zeal, conscientiousness, and I have thought, "Some day, when I have more time, when I am less worried, I will try and see if I cannot make his solitary life happier, make him less eccentric." I have felt that it was hard

[1] *John G. Paton*, iii. 44. [2] Gurnall.

for him to be condemned to loneliness, to be cheered by scanty sympathy on his course, which was an honest hard-fought one, because his voice was loud, and other little matters. I feel that I have weakly disregarded a noble human soul because it had an unsightly body; and now he has gone, and I cannot ask his pardon or make amends.[1]

"But who art thou, with curious beauty graced,
O woman, stamped with some bright heavenly seal?
Why go thy feet on wings, and in such haste?"

"I am that maid whose secret few may steal,
Called Opportunity. I hasten by
Because my feet are treading on a wheel,

Being more swift to run than birds to fly.
And rightly on my feet my wings I wear,
To blind the sight of those who track and spy;

Rightly in front I hold my scattered hair
To veil my face, and down my breast to fall,
Lest men should know my name when I am there;

And leave behind my back no wisp at all
For eager folk to clutch, what time I glide
So near, and turn, and pass beyond recall."

"Tell me; who is that Figure at thy side?"
"Penitence. Mark this well that by decree
Who let me go must keep her for his bride.

And thou hast spent much time in talk with me
Busied with thoughts and fancies vainly grand,
Nor hast remarked, O fool, neither dost see
How lightly I have fled beneath thy hand."[2]

IV.

Why We must Cease from Working.

1. *The coming night.*—It was Jesus who assured us that God was the God of the living, not of the dead; yet it was Jesus who told us that the night was coming. In the glamour and fretful haste

[1] *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, i. 105.
[2] J. E. Flecker, *Forty-two Poems*, 28.

of the day, we too often forget the blackness of the night into which it is rushing, and thereby lose all the directness and concentration of aim, which would chase away the terror of the night when it falls. And yet terror there should be none; for in the beginning God ordained that in every night the moon and the stars should shine, and no night can be very dark into which Christ the Light has passed. Yet, with all its gracious possibilities, it is night that awaits us. The longest day dies into night, and though out of the darkness a new day will be born, yet that darkness is the grave of a day that is gone.

¶ The greatest of English moralists felt this so strongly, that on the dial of his watch—ready to catch his eye whenever he looked at it—he had these words engraved in their original tongue—"For the night cometh." He thought it fit that every time he looked to see how time was going on, he might be reminded of the end of it. He thought there was something he might be the better for remembering, at the commencement of every engagement, in every company, in every place, in every occupation; in the bustle of the street when crowds of men went by; in the quiet chamber over his papers and his books, where the hours passed on so silently; in the view of regal state, and youthful beauty; still something worth remembering in that most suggestive truth expressed in the simple words—"For the night cometh!"[1]

¶ "Work while you have light," especially while you have the light of morning. There are few things more wonderful to me than that old people never tell young ones how precious their youth is. They sometimes sentimentally regret their own earlier days; sometimes prudently forget them; often foolishly rebuke the young, often more foolishly indulge, often most foolishly thwart and restrain; but scarcely ever warn or watch them. Remember, then, that I, at least, have warned *you*, that the happiness of your life, and its power, and its part and rank in earth or in heaven, depend on the way you pass your days now.[2]

¶ Bishop Whipple tells a story of an old man among the North American Indians who was confirmed late in life. His rheumatism made kneeling very painful to him. He said to the Bishop: "I put it off too long. I ought to have done it when my knees were not rheumatic."[3]

[1] A. K. H. Boyd, *The Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson*, ii. 255.
[2] Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (*Works*, xviii. 37).
[3] D. Williamson, *From Boyhood to Manhood*, 172.

Just on the Borders of Enchanted Land
We linger,—culling here and there some bloom;
From distant gardens sweet and rare perfume
The soft breeze gently wafteth where we stand.
We might have enter'd—you and I, dear Heart!
Lo, the dusk falleth—and 'tis time to part.[1]

2. *Man is immortal till his work is done.*—Let us grasp this thought that no good man dies with his work half done. We may not see its last touch. It may appear to our dim vision to be sunset at noon. But He in whose hand is our time, and from whom we receive our task, sets His seal and attestation upon the work done in His name. Sometimes you will hear it said that a good man has died prematurely; you have even heard it said that Christ died early. By what false standard do we reach such extraordinary decisions as these? All standards are false that are not in harmony with this great utterance. "We must work the works of him that sent me, *while it is day.*"

¶ Edward Thring, of Uppingham, wrote out this prayer when he was a student at Cambridge: "O God, give me work till the end of my life, and life till the end of my work; for Christ's sake, Amen."[2]

¶ Lord, I read of the two witnesses, And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. They could not be killed whilst they were doing, but when they had done their work; during their employment they were invincible. No better armour against the darts of death than to be busied in Thy service. Why art thou so heavy, O my soul? No malice of man can antedate my end a minute, whilst my Maker hath any work for me to do. And when all my daily task is ended, why should I grudge then to go to bed?[3]

Let me not pass till eve,
  Till that day's fight is done;
What soldier cares to leave
  The field until it's won!
And I have loved my work and fain
Would be deemed worthy of the ranks again.

[1] Una, *In Life's Garden*, 3.
[2] *Morning Watch*, 1903, p. 10.
[3] Thomas Fuller.

Let twilight come, then night,
And when the first birds sing
Their matin songs, and light
Wakens each slumbering thing,
Let some one waken me, and set
My feet to steps that lead me upward yet.

The Greatest Thing in the World.

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THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD.

The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.—John x. 10.

JESUS is here contrasting Himself with other teachers; with those who taught the people only in order to win their following, while He, in the spirit of disinterested love, taught them for their own good. Those were more worthy of the title "thieves" than "shepherds," for their object was a selfish and a sectarian, not a humanitarian one. They wanted men for their church. He wanted men for their salvation. He claimed to be the "Good Shepherd" because He secured for the sheep life at the cost of His own. And not merely that. It was not bare life that He secured for them, but *abounding* life, life that it is a joy to live.

The sheepfold of the East is an enclosure made of high stakes or palings. As the evening closes in, the shepherd comes from the pasture-land leading his flock of sheep. It is a small flock always, such as he can oversee easily; and he knows every sheep by nature and by name. He leads the flock into the fold. Another shepherd comes with his flock. And when all the flocks are housed, the porter shuts the door (each shepherd having gone home to his cottage in the neighbour village), and stays beside the flocks till morning. In the night a thief comes stealthily, climbs over the palings, and slips down noiselessly into the fold. He lays hold of one of the sheep, but the porter has seen him. There is a struggle. If not the porter himself, at least the sheep the thief has seized is killed, and probably destroyed. He escapes before the shepherds arrive in the morning. With the early dawn the shepherds come. Each shepherd knocks at the door of the sheepfold; the porter opens. He calls his own flock by name, and they follow him away to the pasture-ground for the day.

Jesus is the Shepherd of the sheep. The Pharisees and Sadducees are the thieves. Jesus comes to give: they come to steal. Jesus comes to give life: they come to take life away. Jesus comes to give life in abundance: they come to destroy it altogether. The Pharisees and Sadducees of to-day are the enemies of Christ, be they who they may. They are the world, the flesh, the devil. The sheep are those for whom the choice is waiting. Choose ye this day. *We* are the sheep of some one's pasture—His or the Devil's. We may follow Him to receive, to receive life, to receive life in abundance. We may follow Satan to lose, to lose life, to lose it utterly!

1. The thief *takes*: the Shepherd *gives*. "The thief cometh not, but that he may steal: I came that they may have." This is the ineffaceable distinction between the world and the Saviour. The world cries, "Give me": the Saviour cries, "I give thee." The world is selfish: the Saviour is unselfish. The princes of this world exercise lordship: I am among you as He that serveth. Selfishness, they say, is the essence of sin: it is certainly the essence of the world, which is the sphere of sin. The world says—and practises it—that it is more blessed to receive than to give: Jesus says it is more blessed to give than to receive; and He gave His life a ransom.

2. The thief *takes life*: the Shepherd *gives life*. "The thief cometh not, but that he may kill: I came that they may have life." Life and death are the great words of Scripture, and their meaning must be watched. "Death" on the lips of Jesus is not physical, but spiritual. "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth"—and they laughed Him to scorn. As if they did not know when a person was dead! But He spake not of the death of the body. That was not death. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." So also with "Life." Life was not physical health and strength, it was fellowship with God, in the language of Jesus. Life, say the men of science, is correspondence with the things around us; death comes when we get out of touch. Spiritual life is correspondence with Him who is a spirit; it is trust, it is truth. Every antagonist of God—the world, the flesh, the devil—seeks to break our fellowship with God. Till Satan came, Adam walked with God; then he hid himself. Jesus comes

to the hidden Adam that He may restore the fellowship. "That they all may be one as we are: I in them, and thou in me." "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

3. The thief comes to *destroy*: Jesus comes to *give life abundantly*. Before the thief—be he world, flesh, devil—can destroy, he must get us in his grasp. This is a late stage of the process. We lose when we begin to follow the world; then we are killed, the very conscience becoming blunt and blind; then we are utterly destroyed, generally body and soul, though the body does not always visibly show it. Before Jesus can give us life in abundance, He must give us life. We are first born again, and then we are changed into the same image from glory to glory.

I.

Life.

1. Suppose we were asked any of the following questions:—Can you tell me in a word the subject of the New Testament? Or, can you explain, just as briefly, the object with which Christ came into the world? Or, can you indicate the final purpose of the multitude of various religious organizations and movements which we find at work all round us, many of them tending, like other kinds of modern machinery, to become more and more complex? Can you say why all the sermons are preached, why all the various services are held, why all our Communions are made?

Will not a single word answer all these questions? Surely the one word "life" is a sufficient reply to them all. Is not life the one subject of all Christian teaching and study? Is not life the one object of every kind of Christian effort?

2. From time to time in the course of His ministry our Lord briefly, yet quite comprehensively expressed, by means of some pregnant phrase, His whole purpose and object. For instance, in the hearing of the Pharisees, He said it was "for judgment" that He came into this world. Then He told Pilate that He came "to bear witness of the truth." But never more fully or completely

did our Lord express the whole purpose of His mission than in these words of the text—"I came that they may have life."

¶ Sum up the gospel in a single word, and that one word is "life." Get at the heart of all Christ had to teach, and life is nestling against that heart. One thought determines every other thought; one fact interprets and arranges everything, and that one fact, so dominant and regal, is the deep fact of life. Deeper than faith, for faith is but a name, unless it issue from a heart that lives; deeper than love, though God Himself be love, for without life love would be impossible, life is the compendium of the gospel, the sweet epitome of all its news; it is the word that gathers in itself the music and the ministry of Christ. "The words that I speak unto you," He said, "they are spirit, and they are life." "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." "I am the resurrection and the life." All that He came to teach, all that He was, is summed and centred in that little word.[1]

3. There are always two ways of interpreting such a word as "life," when we find it in Holy Scripture. There is the exclusive or distinctive meaning, in which, *e.g.*, life stands for the "life that is life indeed," eternal life, the highest life of the soul. And there is the inclusive or general meaning, in which the word gathers up and covers all the meanings of which it is capable, so that in this case life would mean vitality in all its forms, from physical vigour up to the highest energies of man's spirit inspired by the Spirit of God.

¶ Before all things beware of narrow and unworthy conceptions of life. That which God hath joined, let not man put asunder. The animal life, the social life, and the spiritual life form one organic whole; and though we can have the lower without the higher, we cannot have the higher without the lower. The social life is unsound if the animal life is stunted in the slums or the monasteries, and the life to God is maimed if either the social life or the animal life is counted profane. No doubt it is better to enter into life with one eye than to be cast into outer darkness; but it is better still to enter having two eyes. As the plant feeds on things without life, so the animal life feeds ultimately on plant life, the social life feeds on the animal life, and the life to God feeds on the social life.[2]

[1] G. H. Morrison

[2] H. M. Gwatkin, in *The Interpreter*, January, 1912, p. 146.

4. Life as we see it is manifested in a succession of rising grades. Lowest, there is the vegetable world or plant life, with no volition or consciousness, tied down by invariable laws. Higher, we witness in the animal world the rise of life from the physical to the psychical; in even the lowest forms of animal life there would seem to be some dawning consciousness and volition. In man, the inner, psychical life shows itself superior to the physical. It is lighted by reason, capable of deliberate choice and self-direction, able to discern the moral ideal, and it is the seat of spiritual aspirations.

We may therefore speak separately (1) of physical or natural life, (2) of intellectual, (3) of moral, and (4) of religious or spiritual life.

(1) *Physical Life.*—Man is a self-conscious Personality with the power of self-formation. Life is given us, a fresh supply comes to us day by day, given into our hand, as it were, and in a large measure we can shape it as we choose—make it larger and fuller, keep it much the same, or let it dwindle away almost into nothingness. How we shall shape our lives will depend for the most part on what we deem the true good. Each man's life is governed by that which seems to him, from moment to moment, most desirable for him to attain to and enjoy. We may not deliberately think about it, yet there is always some end which we seek to gain. The greatness of man and his responsibility lie in the fact that he is capable of determining *what* his end in life shall be. He is thus, so far, his own creator and the "master of his fate." He may remain largely on the level of the merely vegetative life, dominated unconsciously by moods and circumstances. Except when self-interest becomes so keen as to assert itself, he may be entirely a slave to what is outside himself. This cannot be the true life of man. Or he may suffer himself to be swayed in the main by the appetites and passions and necessities of his physical or animal nature, thus also failing to rise to manhood.

The worship of material well-being, with its unceasing round of distractions and occupations, cannot bring rest to its devotees. Nor, again, can the nobler activities and pleasures which attract others exhaust their capacities or satisfy their nature. These at

the best show life under the limitations of time, and, as one of our great poets has said,

> Life's inadequate to joy,
> As the soul sees it.
> A man can use but a man's joy
> And he sees God's.

Therefore by the necessity of our being we cry from the depths of our heart for life, not for the instruments of life only or for the means of living; but for life, for more life, fuller, deeper, more certain, more enduring; for the prospect of untroubled calm with fruitful activity; of strenuous labour without weariness; for the pledge of

> Some future state
> Unlimited in capability
> For joy, as this is in desire for joy:

for a life, that is, reaching through the seen into the unseen: a life able to unite and interpret "all objects of all thought": to satisfy and inspire all effort. So the voice comes to us from the Gospels with a new meaning and a new power: "I came that they may have life."

(2) *Intellectual and emotional Life.*—Christ vitalizes the intellect and the emotions. A man does not live until his intellectual nature is truly awake. Is there anything more calculated to quicken the mental faculties and arouse intellectual enthusiasm than a consideration of those lofty and inspiring topics that were the theme of the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth? He made everybody think. Indeed, what is called "conversion" is often as much an intellectual as a spiritual awakening. The Christian life tends to develop the thinking faculty and is a culture by itself. Interest is aroused in questions that can be solved only by thought and reflection, and spiritual awakening appears often to be accompanied by an accession of intelligence. Plain, uneducated people seem suddenly to attain to a much greater fulness of intellectual life. The man who is "born from above" is raised to a higher plane of contemplation. He holds commerce with larger ideas, and is greatened in his whole nature thereby. And what is true of the intellect is true, and generally much more obviously, of the emotions.

(3) *Moral Life.*—The *moral* life is higher than the merely intellectual and emotional. "The honest man"—honest all over—"is king o' men for a' that," in spite of all that shines more brightly or that towers above him. The man who can conquer and command himself in loyalty to the visions of justice and duty which shine upon him, who dares to do right though the heavens should fall, who will act honestly whatever the consequences to himself, who seeks always to do justly in relation to himself and his fellows, to respect them as persons equally with himself, whatever their outward position may be, and to serve and help them in whatever way he can, has risen, every man in his inmost self feels and knows, to a far higher conception of life than that which is governed by intellect and emotion merely. He has got, in some measure at least, beyond himself into the larger life of his fellows. The simple fact that he has done so proves that he has reached a higher and truer, richer and fuller life. Christ comes to give moral life.

(4) *Spiritual Life.*—The moral life may not be the highest, although it is inseparable from it. However perfect in itself, it may still have its limitations. It may be bounded by time and limited to earth. While it has a due regard for others as having equal rights and mutual duties, it may fail to recognize a Will above us all, with which we are meant to be in harmony, which, indeed, seeks to operate through us. It may fail to rise to the Infinite, to expand into the Universal, to ally itself with the Divine, to become as far as possible one with God. To be alive to the world around us and our fellow-men therein, but dead to the Eternal Source of being, to whom we owe our all, is surely to come far short of the true *life*. The spirit of life that moves within us and seeks expression through us makes us feel and know that there is a still higher, wider, truer life open to us, inviting us, into which we ought to rise. It is in the life of *religion*, as Jesus Christ set it before us and called us to it, and as God by His Spirit in our heart moves us thereto, that we find the highest and truest life of man. For man is conceived in the image of God Himself, created and called to be His son and heir.

Sometimes the Bible speaks as if the spirit were non-existent in the natural man; but in other places, and perhaps more exactly, it speaks of it as not developed. At all events, it has not attained

its position of superiority and supremacy because the spirit ought to stand up above the other faculties of man and command life. And so essential is this to the Divine conception of man, that where this spiritual element is not operative the Bible speaks of human beings as dead, however much they may be alive in the lower ranges of their faculties. For instance, as already quoted, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." Just look at a woman or a girl who lives in pleasure. Why, is not she the very picture of life? Her body is so glowing with life that her beauty attracts all who see her; her mental life may also be so rich that, wherever she moves in the circles where she seeks her pleasures, she is accompanied by a crowd who admire her wit and cleverness; and her emotional life may be in so healthy a condition that she has a heart rich in love to give to the happy man who is able to win it. She seems to be the very picture of life. Yes! but follow her into another sphere of existence, where a different set of powers comes into operation, and there you will find that she prays not, she thinks not of God, she neither loves nor serves Christ, she is not laying up treasure in heaven; in short, her spirit, the true glory of womanhood, in her is dead; and so, as Scripture says, she "is dead while she liveth."

It goes without saying that Christ confers upon a man completeness of *spiritual* life. In most the spiritual principle lies latent, dormant. It is there, but overlaid by the physical instincts, the animal nature. Christ evokes it, kindles it, raises it to a passion; and when the Spirit of Christ has its "perfect work," all the elements that go to a spiritual life are balanced; faith with love; strength with sympathy; courage and steadfastness with tolerance and tenderness; so that there is produced a noble symmetry of character. Everything is full-grown and yet subordinated to everything else. The *whole man* comes under the elevating and inspiring influence of Christ's life-idea.

¶ The spiritual life is too much regarded as something quite distinct and separate from the other expressions of human faculty. This is a matter rightly urged by Eucken in his writings, and it deserves the serious attention of Christians. As the life of God in man—the life represented in Christ and proceeding from Him to the world—ought to be the deepest influence and the dominating power in the entire life of men, giving direction and character to what we term the secular life and its manifestations

as well as to that which we mark off as religious—"bringing every thought," as St. Paul puts it, "into captivity to the obedience of Christ"; as the whole lower life in the world contributes to the human, so should the physical and entire psychical life of man contribute to the spiritual. Ideally, that was first, although last in appearance. It is life in its truth and therefore should embrace all lower manifestations without exception.[1]

5. We are now able to see in some measure what Christ meant when He said, "I came that they may have life." He meant realization of self, service for others, and fellowship with God.

(1) *Life is fellowship with God.*—The life which Christ is and which Christ communicates, the life which fills our whole being as we realize its capacities, is active fellowship with God. "This is," not this shall be in some unimaginable future, "this is," Christ said, even now, in the light and shadow of our changing days, "life eternal, that they might know," with ever fuller knowledge, "thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3). For the knowledge by which we live is a knowledge which grows: not truth given and mastered once for all, but truth to be illuminated and interpreted by the ever increasing sum of human experience. Thus the coming of Christ, the Incarnation, binds together two worlds, and makes the earthly with all its workings a sacrament, so to speak, of the heavenly.

¶ A few years ago a famous book called attention to a definition of life, given by an eminent man of science, whose attitude towards Christianity can hardly be regarded as friendly; and then proceeded to make good use of it. Perfect life was defined as perfect correspondence with environment. Working with that definition, the meaning of this verse becomes blessed indeed. For the environment of a man's soul consists on the one hand in God and in influences from God (always the most important things about a man), and on the other hand in the opportunities for the discipline and perfecting of character, which the ordinary circumstances of life afford. It is Christ alone who can put a man into proper correspondence with the former part of that environment, or enable him to meet the urgent and ceaseless demands of the latter. A profitable, if not altogether necessary, exercise of thought would be the attempt to re-state some of the leading doctrines of Christianity from the same point of view. The Incarnation, for instance, might be regarded as "God opening up

[1] W. L. Walker, *The True Christ*, 180.

to man the possibility of correspondence with Himself through Jesus Christ." Because Christ thus brings us right conceptions of what God is and of what we may become in relation to Him, and, better still, because He breathes into us the power to become it all, the statement of this verse admits almost of a scientific defence. It is Christ alone who can give men what science itself has to recognize as life; and He gives that with such largesse and abundance that, if we like, it will survive all the dangers of this world, and last on in undecaying vigour and ever richer functions throughout eternity.[1]

(2) *Life is service for others.*—What is the highest duty of life? It is certainly not personal acquisition, but the rendering of the fullest service that lies within our power; it is also bestowing upon others the fullest possible opportunity of rendering that service. To enable men to do this Christ taught and healed; but also, and this was His most important work of all, He transformed their characters from sin to holiness. In the light of Christ's teaching what is the joy of life? It does not consist in thinking how much we have obtained. Does it not rather consist in inspiring others with life? Is it not found in awakening others to high ideals? Indeed, is it not the highest happiness to struggle, and to encourage others to struggle, after those ideals? What, again, in the light of Christ's teaching, is the end or purpose of life? Is it not to bestow life upon others, to impart to others that deep, personal, experimental knowledge of God which we have received through our own personal communion with God, which communion is the essence of eternal life?

Many years ago religion became strongly individualistic. We need not underrate the importance, we should rather speak of the necessity, of cultivating individual knowledge and individual holiness, that is, of making individual effort after the closest personal communion with God in Christ; for by these means we largely obtain that supply of life which it is our duty to bestow. But if we study the lives of some so-called religious people, we might imagine that the text read, I am come into the world that I may have life, that I may secure as much life as possible for myself. By these people life here is apparently regarded only as an opportunity of making themselves as sure as possible of heaven hereafter. But that is not the teaching of Christ.

[1] R. W. Moss, *The Discipline of the Soul*, 27.

We have now a deepening consciousness of the unity, the solidarity of mankind. The truth lies in the phrase, "The Word became flesh"; He took to Himself not simply a human life but humanity. If the Gospel is necessarily addressed to the individual, it is not to the individual alone and isolated, but to the individual as a member of a body. And more than this: Christians are "a kind of firstfruits of God's creatures" (James i. 18). They are taught to look to an end in which the differences of race and condition and even the fundamental distinctions of sex shall be done away: "There can be," St. Paul writes, "neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye are all one (man) in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28).

On all sides there is an indefinite desire for closer fellowship among men; a restless, almost impatient, striving to alleviate distress and to remove its causes; a willingness to acknowledge that all wealth, material, intellectual, moral, spiritual, is a trust to be administered for the common good. Numberless lines of reflection constrain us to confess that our life is in no sense our own either in its origin or in its development; that the ideal which in "hours of insight" rises before us is not of our creation, but a Divine disclosure, "the fountain light of all our day, a master light of all our seeing." Many and unexpected lessons from the interpretation of history and the interpretation of nature press upon us the ennobling duty of taking our part in the fulfilment of a purpose of unimaginable grandeur and infinite hope, at length discernible in its broad outlines, of obeying the call addressed to our age and nation, the call to service of man and fellowship with God in Christ.

¶ One of the most distinguished men in this country once described in a public address what he called his creed. He disclaimed any intention of speaking in the name of religion. "I do not trench," he said, "on the province of spiritual guides." None the less, he was led to sum up his faith in what he called the triune formula of the joy, the duty, and the end of life. What is the joy of life? It is to use one's powers. And what is the duty of life? It is to do with thy might what thy hand finds to do. And what is the end of life? It is nothing else than life itself. So to live as to live more truly, wisely, effectively, abundantly,—that is at once joy, duty, and end. It is most interesting to observe a man who may be properly called, in the best

sense, a man of the world, approaching so closely to the language of the Christian religion. Throughout the New Testament the aim of life is to gain more life. "I came," says Jesus, "that they may have life, and may have it abundantly." What is the reward of one's bodily exercise? It is the capacity to use the body more effectively. You train your life, and the result of your training is more life. What is the reward of keeping your temper? It is the capacity to keep your temper better. What is the consequence of doing your duty? It is the ability to do more duties. Out of the duty done opens the strength to do a larger duty. You have been faithful over a few things and become the ruler over many things.

There is, however, one striking difference between the self-cultivating life and the Christian life. The man of the world finds the joy and duty and end of life in its increase of his own resources. The Christian teaching finds that joy and duty and end, not in getting, but in giving life. "I came," says Jesus, not to secure more life for Myself, but "that *they* may have life." "He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." "Death worketh in us," says the Apostle Paul, "but life in you." The triune formula of joy, duty, and end, according to the Christian teaching, is discovered in the communicative and self-propagating nature of spiritual power. What is the joy of life? It is the discovery of the capacity to inspire life. And what is the duty of life? It is not acquisition, but service. And what is the end of life, or, in the language of the New Testament, its crown? It is not a crown of gold, or gems, which one may wear on his own head; it is, as the Book of Revelation says, "a crown of life,"—the increase of capacity, the enrichment of opportunity, the chance to be of use, the power to say with Jesus Christ: "I give unto them eternal life."[1]

(3) *Life is the realization of self.*—What a responsibility it is to live at all, to be one link in that great chain of existence which God is ever weaving in the secrets of His providence. Just as in some great carpet factory you see the coloured threads darting in under the swift-gliding machinery—to be lost, as you think, in the intricacies of the meshes—but reappearing, a tuft here, a shade there, a colour there, in a pattern slowly unfolding at your feet, so nations, individuals, lives great and small appear, disappear, reappear in the great secrets of God's will. It is a wonderful thing to live; even to have opened our eyes on the order, the

[1] F. G. Peabody, *Mornings in the College Chapel*, ii. 107.

beauty of this world, with its marvellous history and its glorious possibility, is to merit that burst of approving wonder, if one may venture to say so with reverence, which escaped from the lips of our blessed Lord, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see."

But what is that undertone of sorrow which we see stamped sometimes as the dominant mark of expression on the faces we meet? What is that awful mystery of pain and death and sickness and bereavement? It is the echo of the old wail of the Greek tragedy, "Not to be born is the best thing in the world, and failing that, to die as quickly as possible, and to fade away into nothingness." A life alone, unilluminated, unspiritualized, unhelped, may be a doubtful blessing after all.

It was just when men had found out this, just when it was bursting upon them in the most bitter anguish of a startling truth, when emperors were offering a reward to any one who could teach them a new pleasure, when Stoics were asserting that death was the end and the only mode of escape from the evils of life—it was then that a new revelation burst upon the world, heralded by the angels who appeared in the heavens on that Christmas Eve; God came to make life a richer blessing, a truer happiness, to make possible that life which alone can be called life. He came in His Incarnation, with His glorious proclamation, to which the suffering world clings with eager tenacity, "I came that they may have life." Man may now claim something more than existence, something more even than a conscious contribution to the great widening out of the ages; he can claim life in its highest form, supernatural life, by the power and the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Supernatural life, what is this? A life which is above nature, above its aches and pains, its failures, its disappointments, above death itself. "I came that they may have life."

Here, then, lies our duty. It is, first and above all, to realize this life, and then to display it. It is our task not merely so to argue that the world shall listen to us when we ask, "Why do you not believe as we do?" but so to act that the world of its own accord shall ask, "Why cannot we live as you do?"

¶ I believe that the great reason why so much of our toil and giving, our work and self-denial, counts for so much less than it should is because so many of us men and women are living on the

wrong side of our power—as somebody has put it—on the wrong side of Pentecost. Chronologically, we are living on the right side. Many of us know Christ, are following Christ, some closer, some further off; but some have not claimed our own Pentecost, and sought at Christ's hands that equipment without which all other equipment counts for nothing, the Holy Ghost of God in the life, that which is to the Christian more of what genius is to the artist, and without which, whatever his technique, there can be no soul because there is no life. All Christians have the Spirit, but all Christians have not the fulness of the Spirit, and it is the fulness of the Spirit that is the clamant want to-day, as it is the clamant want of every day.[1]

¶ Since most remote times and among the different nations, the great teachers of humanity have revealed to men ever clearer definitions of life, which solve its internal contradiction, and have pointed out to them the true good and the true life that are proper for man. Since the position of men in the world is the same for all men, and, therefore, the contradiction between his striving after his personal good and the consciousness of its impossibility is the same also, all the definitions of the true good and, therefore, of the true life, as revealed to men by the greatest minds of humanity, are by their essence the same.

"Life is the dissemination of that light which came down from heaven for the good of men," Confucius said, six hundred years before Christ.

"Life is a wandering and perfecting of the souls attaining a greater and ever greater good," said the Brahmins of about the same time.

"Life is self-renunciation for the sake of attaining blissful Nirvana," said Buddha, a contemporary of Confucius.

"Life is the path of humility and abasement for the sake of attaining the good," said Lao-tse, another contemporary of Confucius.

"Life is that which God blew into the nostrils of man, in order that he, fulfilling the law, might attain the good," says the Jewish wisdom.

"Life is subjection to reason, which gives men the good," said the Stoics.

"Life is love of God and of our neighbour, which gives man the good," said Christ, including all the former definitions into His own.[2]

[1] A. Shepherd.

[2] Tolstoy, *On Life* (*Complete Works*, xvi. 244).

II.

Abundance of Life.

"And may have it abundantly."

What does this mean? It can hardly denote that some further gift will be added to that of life, inasmuch as spiritual life in its processes and issues includes all that even a God can give. It means that the life will be given so plentifully that there will be no need for a devout soul ever to languish, that its life will become buoyant, possessed always of just a little more vital energy than is really needed either for its endurance of pain or for its triumph over sin. One of the greatest of Methodist theologians once expounded the phrase as a pledge of "more spiritual life than Adam lost, more than unfallen man could ever have known, more than eternity itself can contain."

¶ Holy Scripture is fond of large promises. In one passage, for instance, the writer was unable to find in the language he was using a word that was adequate, and so he coined a new one, and in that way managed to express what the Authorized Version renders, God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Even in the Old Testament large words are occasionally met with, especially when there is any reference to the patience or bounty of God. Jeremiah teaches one or two ethical truths more forcibly than they are taught in any other part of Scripture, but he is probably regarded, justly or unjustly, as the dullest and most depressed of inspired writers. Even Jeremiah represents Jehovah once as saying, "I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness." This verse goes beyond that; for, whilst that speaks of satisfaction and satiety, this speaks of superfluity. It sets forth the purpose of Christ's coming as being to bring to man God's gift of a life that can never be exhausted, the energies of which may always exceed our duties, and the range of which has no limit.[1]

1. The abundant life is *a life of great vitality.*—In the spiritual world, as in every other sphere of being with which we are acquainted, various degrees of vitality are to be found. The rule obtains among all organisms on the globe that the unknown force which we call "life" exhibits itself with feebler intensity in some

[1] R. W. Moss, *The Discipline of the Soul*, 27.

species than in others, and in some individuals within each species. Weak vitality in animals is marked by dulness of sensation, by a more restricted range of action, by less sensibility to pain, and by the comparative absence of intelligence. A similar diversity obtains among human beings. In many cases delicacy of constitution may be the index to a low vitality. We speak, too, of the slow understanding, the cold heart, and the feeble will. What we mean is that in such cases the life-power is scanty. On the other hand, individuals are found who seem to be all force and fire. A robust physique and a vigorous personality are far from being always combined in the same individual; but where these do combine, we recognize the conditions of exceptional power. When we meet with a man of quick perception and keen feelings, whose sympathies run swiftly in many directions, who is prompt in his decisions and so energetic in action that he can infuse into others a little of his own ardent temperament, then we all acknowledge the presence of a strong or exuberant vitality. Of him it may be said that he has abundance of life.

The striking words of the text imply that it is just the same in the higher region of Christian experience. They prepare us to find in the Church, as we do, examples of every degree of spiritual animation. This depends partly on natural capacity, partly on the extent to which the Holy Spirit is suffered to operate and rule within the interior life. There are lukewarm believers, and believers aflame with fervour; molluscous Christians, torpid or inert, and Christians full of faith and power. If a low type of religious vitality be unhappily prevalent in most Churches, yet we are now and then taught by illustrious exceptions of what consecration and saintliness a man is capable when he not only has in him the life of Christ, but has that life "abundantly."

¶ It is deficient vitality more even than ignorance that makes the mischief and misery of the world. "To be weak," a poet has said, "is to be miserable, doing or suffering"; whereas to be alive is to be strong in faith and hope and love—is to be in tune with all holy and beautiful influences that lift up the soul above sordid aims and mean thoughts. To be alive is to be open to sympathy at every pore, to face life's ills in a cheerful and resolute spirit, to be full of the moral energy that throws off the poison of evil, as a perfectly healthy body repels the germs of disease.[1]

[1] J. W. Shepard, *Light and Life*, 250.

¶ An embankment is to be thrown up, or a cutting to be dug out. You want labourers. Here are your spades, and your picks, and your wheelbarrows, but the men are required. See, a number of persons offer themselves for hire. They are very thin, they have singularly bright eyes, sunken cheeks, and hollow churchyard coughs—they are a choice company from the Consumptive Hospital. Will you hire them? Why do you look so dubious? These men have life. "Oh, yes," you say, "but I wish they had it more abundantly: they cannot do such work as I have to offer them."[1]

2. The abundant life is *a life of wide interests.*—It has come true, even with reference to ordinary secular affairs, that the effect of Christianity has been, not to deaden men to the interests of this life, with its common joys and sorrows, but, on the contrary, to make their experience larger and more intense. This is not the prevalent opinion. Both the injudicious friends of Christianity and its shrewd opponents have represented it as rendering its disciples "dead to the world," in a quite different sense from that of the New Testament. Perhaps the ancient error of the ascetics is in part responsible for this current view. It is true enough that the gospel does deliver a man from exorbitant and unreasonable concern about affairs which are merely private or personal. It rids us—or it ought to rid us—of excessive longing after temporal good for its own sake; and it makes it impossible for us to indulge in extravagant regret when we forfeit temporal advantages. It teaches us to regard this world mainly as a scene of discipline. But it is a mistaken inference from this that secular pleasure and pain, gain and loss, birth and death, and whatever goes to fill up our daily round, must have lost interest or meaning for the true Christian. On the contrary, everything which happens gains in meaning and in interest by being brought, as the Gospel brings it, into relationship with God and with eternity. This world itself is become a graver and a vaster place to Christians since Jesus Christ died for it. Each trifling incident—say when a sparrow falls—is seen now to be linked to the will of our Heavenly Father and woven into a plan which has man's spiritual good for its issue. Homes with their births and death-beds, their daily tables and nurseries for Christ's

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

little ones, are infinitely more sacred spots, so near are they seen to lie to the gate of heaven. Common business rises in importance when by it you have to glorify your Saviour and serve your brother-men. Social and political problems of the hour do not claim less attention from the Christian, but more, because in them is wrapt up the welfare of that humanity for which Jesus suffered and which He calls upon us to seek and save along with Him. Christianity is so far from being a deadening influence, dulling one's concern in everything which touches the well-being of society, that it is precisely Christianity that has elevated this mean life by letting in upon it the light of eternity. It has brought into relief all its possibilities, and has made every small thing grand and every dull person noble by linking them to the destinies of our race—to the everlasting God and to the solemn cross of His dear Son.

¶ Christ came that we might have life, and life in all its range. He was not like some who have even boasted that they care for nothing but immortal souls. In a far deeper sense than the Roman ever dreamed of, nothing that is human can be foreign to its incarnate Lord. Every creature of God claimed His loving sympathy. He could rejoice in the glory of the lilies and the joy of the birds. The beginning of His mighty signs He did at the marriage feast, and the first of His royal gifts was of the wine that maketh glad the heart of man. He feeds the multitude, and does not forget to command that something be given to the child to eat. He passes through a short and bright career of doing good. To the sick, and even to the dead, He gives the bounding joy of life restored; and yet it is no formal gift, but the natural outflow of the loving spirit of the sinless man.[1]

¶ Richard Le Gallienne, in *The Religion of a Literary Man*, tells of a friend of his who lost her husband by a sudden and violent death. It was a heart-breaking tragedy, and some of her friends looked to see her sink beneath the shock. But she did not. With courage and self-command she came back from the graveyard to resume her work. And when some of her friends marvelled at it, one who knew her intimately said, "No—she is a woman of many interests." That sounded strange, "a woman of many interests." What had that to do with her loss? Simply this: her life was too large to be defeated by any loss death could inflict. It was not that she did not love her husband with "the love that makes the world a temple." But the power that

[1] H. M. Gwatkin.

made her capable of one intense affection, made her capable of inviolable attachments to children, and friends, and mission schools, and charities. So when death left her a widow, instead of withdrawing herself from life's activities, she enshrined in her heart the memory of the absent one, and gave herself anew to the work of her life.[1]

3. The abundant life is *a life of deep enjoyment.*—A man is not *fully* living, who does not *enjoy* living. It is when we are weak and only half alive that life is a burden and a sigh. Fulness of life is fulness of joy. This Christ came to confer.

Life is gladness, save where Death has touched it in sickness, in sin, or in what the lawyers call the Act of God; and the gladness takes higher forms as we move up the scale of life. Only the higher animals can play, and only man can laugh with gladness. Then come the higher joys of social life, with their chequering of sorrow; and yet again, crowning all and blending with them all, the joy that overcometh sorrow, the joy of peace with God, the peace that passeth understanding, the peace of Christ, the peace our own good Lord has left us.

Nothing is more interesting or more remarkable in the history of Christianity than the radiant joy which filled the hearts of its first disciples. Read how "with gladness and singleness of heart" they "broke their bread," how they took "joyfully" even "the spoiling of their goods"; how they went singing to their martyrdoms as to a festival. Go into the Catacombs and read the inscriptions inspired by their simple, happy faith. It was because the word and life of Christ "dwelt in them richly" that for very gladness they broke out into incessant "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." That is the ideal Christian temperament. "Rejoice, and again I say unto you rejoice." But the joy will come only as the life comes. You have seen the sportive lamb in the meadows in the springtime. He is full of life and consequently full of joy in life. He frisks and gambols all the day long. "He leaps in useless leaps; he leaps with all his legs up at once into the air"; in his abounding life and happiness he cannot help it; "and to the wise man every leap of that little heart is a new note of the heavenly anthem—fulness of life." And truly those who can accept Christ's revelation of the Father

[1] C. C. Albertson *The Gospel According to Christ*, 193.

in Heaven caring for His children, and the "hope full of immortality" which He disclosed, ought to be the happiest of men and to show it.

¶ No wonder the Christian has joy. No wonder the Apostle Peter could exclaim, "Believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. i. 8). Believing, *we* rejoice. In other words, faith produces joy. The relation is that of inseparability, of cause and effect. The believing is the cause of the rejoicing. Faith brings gladness. Trusting brings happiness. Let us not fail to notice also the nature of the joy faith produces. It is "unspeakable." That is, it is unspeakably great. It is also in its nature not a noisy, but "a deep and silent thing." In this sense, too, it is "unspeakable." And that is the reason, we doubt not, why it is so often mistaken for the opposite. Because it is calm and sometimes even grave, the world thinks it severe. But, as has been said, "The gods approve the depth and not the tumult of the soul." Joy may be a very quiet thing, a "calm rapture," as Jonathan Edwards once defined it.[1]

Old sorrows that sat at the heart's sealed gate
  Like sentinels grim and sad,
While out in the night damp, weary and late,
The King, with a gift divinely great,
  Waited to make me glad;

Old fears that hung like a changing cloud
  Over a sunless day;
Old burdens that kept the spirit bowed,
Old wrongs that rankled and clamoured loud—
  They have passed like a dream away.

In the world without and the world within
  He maketh the old things new;
The touch of sorrow, and stain of sin,
Have fled from the gate where the King came in,
  From the chill night's damp and dew.

Anew in the heavens the sweet stars shine,
  On earth new blossoms spring;
The old life lost in the Life divine,
"Thy will be mine, my will is thine,
  Is the new song the new hearts sing.[2]

[1] G. B. F. Hallock, *The Christian Life*, 123.

[2] Mary Lowe Dickinson

4. The abundant life is *a life of eternal duration.*—This is the most familiar aspect of the life which Christ came to give. Its most common title is "eternal life." Now "eternal" is not the exact equivalent of "everlasting"; it is more than everlasting; but it includes the idea of endlessness. The life in Christ can never cease to be. Here in the body, in whatever degree we possess that life, it must come to an end as far as its continued expression through these bodies of flesh and blood is concerned. But there is something in that life that has never found expression, and that cannot find expression, in and through these bodies. There is something in its depths, not of man merely, but of God, something, not finite only but infinite, not merely temporal but eternal. This is why the true life that Christ called men to is always described as "eternal life." It is life above and beyond time and sense. It is eternal because it is nothing less than the life of God in us.

¶ You have seen the aged, whose hearts expanded with their years into even wider and more unselfish affections; whose passions seemed to have been filtered away in life's discipline; over whom the floods of trial had swept only to leave their richness behind; who had passed through struggle into peace; whose serene virtues, as the sun makes bright whatever it shines on, inspired all around with a higher justice and humanity; whose hopeful faith loved to make excursions into that world which they approached; who lived in an atmosphere of beneficent, trusting, and devout thought—you have seen them going down that valley, often so dark, but not dark to them, because there shone into it from above a heavenly light—and here was life. The body might be dying, but the breaking up of the senses only seemed to reveal more and more the soul's light. I have seen such persons die, and laid in the grave, and yet in a few days the remembrance of that event seemed gone from the mind. I could never think of them except as alive. It seemed as if you might meet them at every turn, so entirely did the spiritual life in them overtop and embrace in its radiance, and keep out of view, all the circumstances of mortality. This is life. And more of it is often seen in the patience and submission and cheerful trust of those who can only wait God's will than in those who with their grasping and struggling energies shake the world. The true life is not in length of days; that is but an inferior life which beats in the throbbing blood and flames in the whirl and tempest of the passions.[1]

[1] E. Peabody.

We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings; not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.
Life's but a means unto an end; that end,
To those who dwell in Him, He most in them,
Beginning, mean and end to all things, God.[1]

[1] Bailey, *Festus.*

The Good Shepherd.

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THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep.—John x. 11.

1. THE imagery of the text is an incidental claim on the part of our Lord to be the Messiah of Israel. For it was as a shepherd that Jehovah was to fulfil His promise of redemption to His people. "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." So wrote Isaiah, and Ezekiel after him, "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out." The Divine promise is fulfilled in Jesus who preaches Himself as the fulfiller and the fulfilment of Israel's hope and expectation: "I am the good shepherd"; and then, going beyond all former revelation of Divine grace and love, He adds, "the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep."

¶ How quietly and unostentatiously, but at the same time with what confidence and assurance, our Lord assumes to Himself titles that were predicted of the Messiah in the Old Testament. He adopts them in the most natural manner, folds them about Him as a man would clothe himself in his own garments. There is never any excuse or apology for doing so. Everywhere our Lord takes His Messiahship for granted. He and no other is the being pointed to by the finger of prophecy, and so after His resurrection He took trouble with His disciples to show them out of those Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

2. This Messianic title of "Shepherd" is also freely accorded to Him afterwards by His followers, as, for example, by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who calls Him "that great shepherd of the sheep," and by St. Peter, who speaks of Him as "the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls," and says to the faithful presbyters of the Church "when the chief Shepherd shall appear,

ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." When we pass out of the region of Scripture and from the Apostolic Church the figure still haunts us. The early Christians in the days of their trial and persecution loved to depict on the walls of the catacombs Jesus as the Good Shepherd, with His sheep standing round Him, and earnestly gazing up into His face. With authority and power did our Lord arrogate to Himself the care and guidance of His Church to the end of time when He spoke these expressive words—"I am the good shepherd."

There are two points to be considered—

I. Christ's Claim.

II. Its Significance.

I.

Christ's Claim.

"I am the good shepherd."

1. I am the *Shepherd.* We are all familiar enough with the ideas connected with shepherd-life as it is pictured amongst ourselves. The poetry of our country dwells much upon it, especially down to about the beginning of last century. It was described as the ideal of a simple natural life. It was associated with the piping times of peace. The shepherds were regarded as happy swains, living a free, healthy life in communion with nature.

But the shepherd's life in Palestine was attended with much hardship and great danger. In a country where at any moment sheep are liable to be swept away by a mountain torrent, or carried off by hill robbers, or torn by wolves, every hour of the shepherd's life is risk. David tells how, in defence of his father's flock, he put his life in his hand and slew both a lion and a bear; while Jacob reminds Laban how he watched the sheep, exposed to the extreme of heat and cold. Pitiless cold at night, long hours of thirst in the day, must be endured, if the flock is to be kept in safety. So it is not difficult to imagine how a feeling of affection would spring up between the lonely Syrian shepherd and the dumb objects of his care. The sheep would follow him wherever he might lead, or call them with his voice.

And so it was the ordinary duty of every shepherd not only to gather and feed and watch the flock, but also to lead them, to know them and to run some risk for them. A great deal has been made out of these last three points in the application of the metaphor to Christ, showing how Christ is the Good Shepherd because He leads His flock, because He knows them, and because He runs some risk for them. But these are not characteristic points of the Good Shepherd as distinguished from the hireling. Even the hireling in the East led the sheep, as that was the ordinary custom, even he knew them to a certain extent, and it was a necessary part of shepherd life to run some risk for the flock.

If that had been all, Jesus might have said "I am a shepherd," but His words are "I am the good shepherd."

¶ A man may be a hired priest, as Demetrius was at Ephesus —"By this craft we get our living." Or he may be a paid demagogue, a great champion of rights, and an investigator of abuses—paid by applause; and while popularity lasts, he will be a reformer—deserting the people when danger comes. There is no vital union between the champion and the defenceless, the teacher and the taught.[1]

2. I am the *good* shepherd. The shepherd's work may be done and done well by the paid servant, it may be faithfully performed and the reward honestly earned; but our Lord's claim to be a shepherd was something essentially different.

"I am the *good* shepherd." Good, not in the sense of benevolent, but in the sense of genuine, true born, of the real kind—just as wine of nobler quality is good compared with the cheaper sort, just as a soldier is good or noble who is a soldier in heart, and not a soldier by mere profession or for pay. It is the same word as that used by St. Paul when he speaks of a good, *i.e.* a noble soldier of Christ. Certain peculiar qualifications made the genuine soldier, certain peculiar qualifications make the genuine or good shepherd.

What, then, is that quality which constitutes the essential characteristic of the Good Shepherd, and without which you cannot conceive the idea of one bearing a true shepherd heart and doing a true shepherd work? The Lord tells us: "The good

[1] F. W. Robertson.

shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep." He seeks the safety and well-being of the sheep; and He does so at the cost of any self-sacrifice, even of life itself.

¶ Out on one of the great sheep-ranges of the North-West of America, a shepherd was left in a very lonely station in charge of a large flock of sheep. He lived in a little cottage which was fitted up with the necessary comforts for all seasons of the year. There was no other house anywhere near. This man, Hans Neilson, lived there with only his dog Shep for company. After he had lived out there for two years there came a dreadfully severe winter. The sheep-sheds were old, and the shelter for the sheep was poor. New sheds were to be built in the following spring. It was hard work for Hans, but he succeeded in saving all his sheep until the last and most violent blizzard of all. The wind blew and the snow fell for three days. After it was over, help was sent from headquarters to see how Hans had fared. They found his dead body near the sheep-folds, and his dog standing on guard by his master. The sheep were all alive and well, and it was quite clear to the men that Hans had been trying to place additional protection at the broken places in the old sheds when his brave battle ceased and he was overcome by the intense cold. He might have saved his life by neglecting the sheep, but he had literally given his life for his sheep.[1]

3. "I am *the* good shepherd." Why did Christ call Himself *the* Good Shepherd? Many interpret this "the" as a "the" of degree, and amplify the passage thus: "There are many good shepherds, but I am *the* Good Shepherd, *par excellence*." But this is not the meaning of the text. Christ has showed us that the essence of good shepherding lies in this fact of laying down one's life for the sheep. No man has any claim at all to be called a good shepherd unless he does lay down his life for the sheep. Christ is the only one to whom the epithet "Good Shepherd" in its metaphorical sense may be applied at all. The "the" is an absolute one. Christ is not to be considered as first among compeers, but as the one between whom and others there can never be any comparison at all. Our Lord not only declares that He is the reality of which the earthly shepherd is the shadow, and that He as such is the flawless, perfect One, but that He alone is the reality. "I am the Good Shepherd; in Me and in Me alone is that which men need."

[1] J. Learmount, *In God's Orchard*, 221.

¶ This question, "Was Christ merely *a* good Man and *a* great Teacher, or was He something more? Is He to be to us simply one of many teachers, to be discarded possibly sooner or later because, however valuable in the past, the world is destined more and more to outgrow His teaching? Is He to be merely one of many, or are His claims upon us unique, supreme, paramount?"—this is a question which I do not think you can afford to leave wholly unanswered. To this extent the question, "What think ye of Christ?" is one which you must face. To leave it on one side is virtually to negative any exceptional claim on Christ's part.[1]

¶ We have just lost one who was at the time of his death, with one exception, the greatest master of the English language still left among us. Some of the press notices of the late Professor Seeley show a strangely inadequate recognition, as it seems to me, of his true place both in English literature and in English religion. The advance of criticism may have somewhat diminished the value of *Ecce Homo* as an historical study: I do not think it has touched its usefulness as a help to practical Christianity. To many in our generation *Ecce Homo* has taught far more than such a book as *Imitatio Christi* (with all its truth and beauty) can teach to men who do not live in a medieval monastery, about the practical application of our Lord's moral teaching to the spiritual needs and the everyday duties of modern life. To some of us it has come to seem almost like the very Gospel itself rewritten in the language of the nineteenth century. Its declared purpose is simply to constitute an historical inquiry into the ethical teaching of Jesus Christ. With Theology, strictly speaking, it does not avowedly concern itself at all. And yet the writer who summed up the essence of Christ's teaching in the famous phrase, "the enthusiasm of humanity," found that he could not give an historical account of what Christ taught or of the reasons of His success without recognizing in the fullest and most explicit manner the claim to a unique personal authority which is implied as much in the Sermon on the Mount as in the Johannine version of the Master's life. A morality which is essentially bound up with a devotion to a Person is already a religion. I hardly know of any book that appeals so directly to the conscience of a man anxious, amid all difficulties intellectual and practical, to get an answer for his own soul's sake to the old question, "What must I do to be saved?" The book is throughout intensely practical, and yet it distinctly implies a Theology, a Theology which may be all the more impressive to some minds because it is more often

[1] H. Rashdall, *Doctrine and Development*, 83.

implied than expressed. Had its author attempted to sum up that implied Theology in a sentence, he would perhaps have expressed himself in some such words as these, which I take from a like-minded writer whose name is revered in this place [Oxford]: "For most of us," said Arnold Toynbee, "Christ is the expression of God, *i.e.*, the eternal fact within us and without us. In time of peril, of failing, and of falsehood, the one power that enables us to transcend weakness is the feeling of the communion of the two eternal facts in Christ."[1]

II.

The Significance of Christ's Claim.

"The good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep."

Christ not only proclaims Himself the Good Shepherd; He expounds the significance of this great word. In His exposition, He leads us into depths of Divine wisdom which must evermore constitute the subject of profound study.

1. "The good shepherd *layeth down his life* for the sheep." Christ's love as portrayed in His death illustrates the law of *Sacrifice*. The goodness of Jesus Christ shines forth from Him, and in His death finds its crown and consummation. That death is not an isolated fact, for it is associated with the whole history of Christ's redemption. The Lord, throughout His earthly ministry, set that before Him, and said of it as His baptism, "How am I straitened till it be accomplished." Thus that death was no mere accident or afterthought. It was the necessary outcome of the life and ministry of the incarnate Son of God. Messiah had been represented as the Shepherd of Israel, but it remained for the Son of God, in His supreme revelation, to represent the Shepherd as dying for His flock. And so He says, "the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep."

(1) We must observe the perfect voluntariness of His self-devotion. "No man," He says of His sacrificed life, "taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." There was no external need for Jesus dying an early, violent death. If He had so willed it, He could have kept Himself out of the hands of the men who

[1] H. Rashdall, *Doctrine and Development*, 86.

crucified Him. He lived a life that none other lived, and He died a death that none other died. He lived because He willed to live, and He died because He willed to die. The law of love never expressed itself so gloriously as in the death of Jesus Christ. So He taught mankind through all time that love is sacrifice, when for us men and for our salvation He made that oblation of Himself upon the Cross of Calvary, once, and once for all.

¶ Love must be prepared for the greatest sacrifice. We may never conclude that love is unreal merely because its thoughts are large. It may have the widest schemes, and be prepared to devote the utmost pains to their accomplishment. It should give itself freely to the most romantic enterprises. The Lord would not be for all time the King of Love if He had shrunk back from the cup of suffering which, as He knew, was to be drained at the end of that progress to Jerusalem. We need "public souls"—men and women who are capable of cherishing great ideas, and who delight to spend themselves for their brethren. There is a growing demand for such in the Church and in the Empire. If, in the providence of God, the way should open for any of us to some conspicuous path of devotion, let us count it high honour, and prepare ourselves bravely for the cost it will involve, cost far greater than will appear at the outset; cost of opposition, and criticism, and misunderstanding, and disappointment; cost, it may be, of seeming failure to achieve anything, or to make any immediate impression. Love must be prepared for the greatest sacrifice. That is the first criterion and test.[1]

(2) Christ, the Good Shepherd, in pronouncing goodness to lie in self-sacrifice, is but realizing and consummating that principle which is striving to free itself from the tangled web of Nature. But have we always recognized that the heart of goodness, of natural goodness, lies in self-sacrifice? Have we been loyal to this as the verdict of Nature? Somehow, as we know, we came to believe a little time ago that whatever supernatural grace might demand, Nature laid its approval not upon self-sacrifice, but upon self-assertion. So Science had seemed to say. It had opened our eyes upon a dismal scene in which beast battled with beast, each struggling with desperate energy for its own survival. Nature appeared as a wild and blind monster, working with tooth

[1] A. W. Robinson, *The Voice of Joy and Health*, 167.

and claw, shrieking against our moral creed. There was no goodness to be detected at work in a war where egoism alone counted. But ever since the early recognition of the law of natural selection, which Darwin emphasized as the sole determinant of evolution, Science has been limiting and qualifying the range of its activity.

¶ To many of us it seems there is too much red in the picture which Darwin painted; and the trouble is that his picture has been reproduced by cheaper and coarser processes, until it has lost all subtlety and truth, and become a harsh and ugly print of Nature, as if it were a dismal type of vast gladiatorial show. This is not merely bad as a piece of unbalanced cosmogony; but by a vicious circle the libel projected upon Nature is brought back to justify one set out of human methods, the egoistic; and to condemn others as altruistic. But the organic process depends on much more than a squabble round a platter, or internecine struggle at the margin of subsistence; it includes all the multitudinous efforts for others, as well as for self, between the two poles of hunger and love; all endeavours that mate makes for mate, and parent for offspring, and kin for kin. Love and life are factors in progress as much as pain and death, and the premium in the struggle for existence on tooth and claw is not greater than that on the warm solicitude of the maternal heart, or on the patience of a brooding bird. So, again, we will say if we make a curve of the ascent of vertebrates, marking their position according to the degree of brain development, we find that as the curve ascends the co-ordinates of parental affection and parental love and gentle emotions are heightened. And those organisms so endowed survive, in spite of the admitted egoistic competition. And that is the proof of Nature's censure. Earth may be strong, but it is also lovely, and the lovely and the strong exist together. And we see that, according to its own ascending mind and age, the loving become more and more strong. From the dawn of life, as Herbert Spencer said, altruism has been no less essential than egoism; self-sacrifice is as primordial as self-preservation. More and more we see that it is possible to interpret the ideals of ethical progress through love and sociality, through co-operation and sacrifice, not as mere Utopias, contradicted by natural experience, but as the highest expression of the central evolutionary process in the natural world.[1]

Learn in self-sacrifice to find thy joy,
The only bliss unmingled with alloy;
All lesser pleasures soon must pall and cloy.

[1] Geddes, *Ideals of Science and Faith*, 70.

Better it is to give than to receive,
All to forsake than unto aught to cleave;—
'Tis in the act of giving that we live.

All spiritual Being lives by this—
The ground and basis of the Godhood's bliss;
Who turn therefrom the Life Eternal miss.

For though discharged in full strict duty's round,
If in the chains of self-hood thou art bound—
Lifeless and void of worth thy works are found.

Throughout the extent of Nature's wide domain
See this great law of sacrifice obtain,
The creature's loss conditioning its gain.

The very elements this law obey,—
The beams that from the solar source outray,
The springing fount's perpetual sparkling play.

All living things are constituted so,
All organisms from out earth's womb that grow;
As is the outward, so the to-ward flow:

So that whate'er impedes or hindereth
The pores' free play, the issue of the breath,
Is the concomitant or cause of death:
Would'st truly live?—let go![1]

2. "The good shepherd layeth down his life *for the sheep.*" Christ's death illustrates the law of *Redemption.* Here is the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice: the sacrifice of one instead of another: life saved by the sacrifice of another life. Most of us know the meagre explanation of these words which satisfies some men: they say that Christ merely died as a martyr, in attestation of the truths He taught. But we must observe the strength of the expression which we cannot explain away, "I lay down my life *for* the sheep." If the Shepherd had not sacrificed Himself, the sheep must have been the sacrifice.

There was something the Lord passed through, passed through once and for ever, something awful and unspeakable, in order that we might never share it. We Christians shall never die as He died. Our material bodies will wear away and cease, and they will be carried over the well-trodden way to the cemetery. Men

[1] W. Hall, *Via Crucis.*

will speak of us as having died, but we shall never die as our Saviour died. There was something in His death which His followers will never know. "He that believeth in me shall never taste death."

¶ The danger which threatened us was not bodily death, for from that we are not delivered. But it was something with which the death of the body is intimately connected. Bodily death is as it were the symptom, but not the disease itself. It is that which reveals the presence of the pestilence, but is not itself the real danger. It is like the plague-spot that causes the beholder to shudder, though the spot itself is only slightly painful. Now a skilful physician does not treat symptoms, does not apply his skill to allay superficial distresses, but endeavours to remove the radical disease. If the eye becomes bloodshot he does not treat the eye, but the general system. If an eruption comes out on the skin, he does not treat the skin, but alters the condition of the blood; and it is a small matter whether the symptom goes on to its natural issue, if thereby the eradication of the disease is rather helped than hindered. So it is with death: it is not our danger; no man can suppose that the mere transference from this state to another is injurious; only, death is in our case the symptom of a deep disease, of a real, fatal ailment of soul. We know death not as a mere transference from one world to another, but as our transference from probation to judgment, which sin makes us dread; and also as a transference which in form forcibly exhibits the weakness, the imperfection, the shame of our present state. Thus death connects itself with sin, which our conscience tells us is the great root of all our present misery. It is to us the symptom of the punishment of sin, but the punishment itself is not the death of the body but of the soul; the separation of the soul from all good, from all hope,—in a word, from God. This is the real danger from which Christ delivers us. If this be removed, it is immaterial whether bodily death remain or not; or rather, bodily death is used to help out our complete deliverance, as a symptom of the disease sometimes promotes the cure. Christ has tasted death for every man, and out of each man's cup has sucked the poison, so that now, as we in turn drink it, it is but a sleeping draught. There was a chemistry in His love and perfect obedience which drew the poison to His lips; and, absorbing into His own system all the virulence of it, by the immortal vigour of His own constitution, He overcame its effects, and rose again triumphing over its lethargic potency.[1]

[1] M. Dods.

¶ A doctor in one of the London hospitals found a child-patient dying of diphtheria, and sucked away the suffocating film from the throat, with fatal consequences to himself. Was he justified? There are many side issues to this problem, but they do not alter the main question. To answer it we must put ourselves on the spot at the given moment, and see the two human beings face to face with the emergency; the child gasping for breath, the doctor conscious that he holds in his hands a possible means of retaining the life that has almost escaped. He uses it. Can this be called renouncement? Surely not. It is an action love-prompted, generous, beautiful. He does not act thus in order to give away his own life, but to save the child's; not to lose, but to win something not otherwise to be won.[1]

[1] M. C. Albright, *The Common Heritage*, 77

The Resurrection and the Life.

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The Resurrection and the Life.

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die.—John xi. 25, 26.

In order to appreciate the significance of these words, "I am the resurrection, and the life," let us look at the conditions under which they were spoken.

The revelation was granted to Martha, the bereaved sister, whose cheerful round of domestic activities was suddenly arrested and her heart torn open to its depths—depths hitherto perhaps unsounded—by the thunder-stroke of death. Our Lord uttered His greatest sayings often to very commonplace people. He spoke to Martha not as He might have spoken in an hour of serene communion with some elect and lofty spirit, but as to any of ourselves, to our common human heart chastened by bereavement, awed and awakened by the visitation of death.

Martha's grief was intensified by the fact that Lazarus was cut off in the midst of his days, his task unfinished, his goal unreached. Of all the perplexing problems of the grave this seemed one of the hardest. Why did it claim the man who had just come to the perfection of his powers and was abler than ever he was to perform his task? It was lonely to be without her brother, it was chilling to think of his loneliness; but these griefs came home with double poignancy when she thought that he had not lived out half his days, and might still have been with them.

Once more, it seemed an accident that he died. To Martha it seemed cruel—so often He was with them—that Jesus should not be there when He was most needed. Oh, why did it happen that the Lord was not there? It might so easily have been otherwise; and the thought added to her grief.

But at last word was brought of a Visitor welcome above all others; Jesus who had been so strangely long in coming was in Bethany at last. Martha met Him with a cry that was half

faith and half despair—"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died," and she was answered by the quiet words, "Thy brother shall rise again." I think her heart must have been for the moment chilled. Was the Master then going to offer the mere conventional consolation that every visitor of these past days had offered, until she was more than weary of it? "I know," she said—and you can hear an undertone of disappointment and rebellion in the words—"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

She knew that her brother would rise again. But, like the Jews of her time, even like most Christians now, who inherit their resurrection doctrine more from the Jews than from Christ, Martha thought only of a grand and general resurrection-day far distant. Long ere that day she would be with her brother in the supposed place of expectant souls, waiting till the buried body should be raised and given back.

And then came the great words that have pealed through the ages, weighty with the Divine power which so soon sets its seal upon them, gentle with the human sympathy which meant them for healing to broken hearts: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

A double consciousness spoke in these words: Our Lord knew that He was standing near the grave of a dead disciple: He felt perhaps even more vividly that He was standing in the midst of a dead world. He spoke these words with reference to the occasion He was then dealing with; yet there was a larger meaning in them, and the meaning that was for the moment was only a fragment of their infinite truth.

We are arrested by—

I. The immediate Occasion of the Words.

II. Their eternal Application.

I.

The Immediate Occasion.

"I am the resurrection, and the life."

1. *The promise.*—Martha had expressed her faith in the common doctrine of the resurrection at the last day. Christ

neither denies it nor assents to it, but passes over it as if it had little power to assuage the actual suffering of death. If it be true, it is a far-off event, ages hence, at the last day; it hardly touches the present fact of death. It has nothing definite, immediate, or specially consolatory in its character, being simply an affirmation of future existence. So little power had it that Martha did not think of it till led to it by Christ's question. She doubtless shared the vague belief of the Jews, that "her brother would ascend some time or other on angels' wings into a place somewhere above the stars"; but how could that comfort her? She could not bridge the gulf of time and space between herself and that event. She could get from it no assurance that her brother would ever be known by her; that the ties sundered by death would ever be joined again. There her brother lay in the tomb, dead, fast passing to corruption, soon to become as the dust of the earth, and there he would lie for ages, dead. She herself would soon die and lie beside him, and sleep the long sleep of utter forgetfulness. What comfort is there here for yearning human love that longs for nearness and response?

Martha regarded the resurrection in the last day not necessarily as a spiritual fact or as one having a spiritual bearing, but as a mere matter of destiny like birth and death, a distant mysterious event. Christ draws it near, takes it out of time, vitalizes it, puts it into the category of faith, and connects it with Himself.

(1) "*I* am the resurrection, and the life." For belief in some future great event, Jesus substitutes belief in His own person. It is as if He had said to Martha, "Your faith is not settled on its proper object; you are clinging to a doctrinal truth instead of leaning on a living person; you are thinking of an event, something in the distant future; you should think of me. *I* am the resurrection, and the life. It is not of the rising of the dead at the last day that you should think; that is indeed something to look forward to, but I am the resurrection in my own person; *it* is not apart from *me*." Christ draws her eyes away from one reality to another and a greater—from the grim fact of death to the greater fact of His own person and power and love; He confronts her with this dilemma—she must pronounce either death or Himself to be the greater reality!

¶ There is a wide difference between belief in a doctrine and trust in a person. We can believe a doctrine but we cannot trust it. We can grasp it with our minds, but it makes no appeal to our hearts; like Martha, we may believe in the resurrection without believing in Him who is the resurrection and the life. This is a mistake we often make. We believe in the abstract doctrine and forget the living Person. Half our Christian faith is assent to various propositions instead of trust in a personal Redeemer, who is Himself the substance and explanation of them all. "I," said Jesus, "I am the resurrection, and the life."[1]

(2) "I *am* the resurrection, and the life." In turning Martha's attention to Himself, Jesus substitutes a present for a future object of trust, a living object for a dead. Martha can think only of that remote time when she and her brother will be reunited. Jesus says, I *am* the resurrection, and the life, here and now. In Me the dead live. It is not as if Lazarus had gone to nothingness. He has passed away indeed from you, but to Me he lives, for I am the life, and in Me the dead live.

The intention of our Lord was plainly to make an immediate comfort out of what is generally held to be a prospective joy. People commonly explain the passage still as belonging to a period which is yet to come. They understand it to mean that, when Christ shall appear again, there will be a resurrection, and that then the dead shall live. Doubtless this is in the words. But is this all? Is this the first and chief meaning? No, Christ was decidedly and definitely leading the woman's mind away from what she felt would be to what then actually was. "Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

¶ A gentleman stepping into a poor woman's house saw framed and glazed upon the wall a French note for a thousand francs. He said to the old folks, "How came you by this?" They informed him that a poor French soldier had been taken in by them and nursed until he died, and when he was dying he had given them that little picture as a memorial of him. They thought it such a pretty souvenir that they had framed it, and there it

[1] D. Fairweather, *Bound in the Spirit*, 304.

was adorning the cottage wall. They were greatly surprised when they were told that it was worth a sum which would be quite a little fortune for them if they would but turn it into money. They had done as Martha did when she took the words, "Thy brother shall rise again," and put round about them this handsome frame, "in the resurrection at the last day."[1]

(3) "I am *the resurrection, and the life.*" In some of the Old Testament psalms this idea is brought out with wonderful clearness, and through what we must call sheer faith. The Old Testament saints knew nothing of Him who is the resurrection and the life, and the grave was to most of them only a place of gloom; but occasionally we come across a Psalm like the sixteenth, where the writer protests against the idea of death separating him from God. "Thou wilt not leave thy pious one to see the pit," he says; "thou wilt not leave my soul in Sheol." He feels in his veins the new life God has given him, feels that he is in union with God, and that such a union must for ever abide uninterrupted even by death. So also taught Jesus. "I am the resurrection," He said, "and the life." He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live, because he who is united to Me, he in whom I live, can never in any sense die, for I am the life. That which we call death will be his lot; but life, true life, life which is union with God, life in which Christ lives, is independent of death.

Death had not sundered Lazarus from Jesus; through resurrection it had brought him nearer in reverential love. It had not divided him from his sisters; it had made the ties of affection more strong and holy than they had ever been before. It had not quenched one faculty of his being; for to him every power of sight, and speech, and hearing would be more sacred and noble than they were in his former life. In one word Christ showed this—that there was in him a life that rendered death only the gateway through which it rose into life more perfect, and holy, and free.

¶ At an open-air service in Delhi, held in a Chamar's (boot-maker's) courtyard, another missionary and I had both spoken on faith as a condition of eternal life. When I had finished, a Chamar, who had been working away at his trade all the time,

[1] C. H. Spurgeon.

though evidently listening and thinking as well, remarked, "How do you make out that Christians do not die? Those about here do; and as far as I see, peoples of all religions die. Why, even Brahmans die."

A student-evangelist was with us, and he gave this reply:—"Brother! (let Westerns note how friendly and familiar Eastern preachers are!) you know the Delhi Fort?"

Of course he did! Every Delhi man is proud of that most striking feature of his city, with its high walls of red sandstone glistening in the sun, and its magnificent towering gateways which lead into the city.

Said the preacher, "I want you to imagine for the moment that it has but one exit, the famous Lahore Gate.

In the old days, the great Emperor of India lived inside the Fort, in the Marble Palace, still to be seen, a palace of exquisite beauty and glittering splendour. When the Emperor came forth into the city, as for example he did every Friday to visit the Great Mosque for prayer, he came out at that Lahore Gate in all his glory, and crowds witnessed the Royal spectacle.

In the same Fort was the State Prison with its dungeons of horror, and in them lay the prisoners condemned to death, till the day of execution, when they too passed forth through that same Gate, and crowds witnessed their shame and despair.

This world in which we live is like that Fort, and for all of us there is the one exit, the Gate of Death.

They who accept Christ as their Saviour pass out as 'Kings and Priests' to glory and honour, and they who accept Him not, go forth to dishonour and death."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the heathen listeners. "Well answered."[1]

2. *The fulfilment of the promise.*—Nowhere do we so come to the limit and end of our power as at the door of a vault; nowhere is the weakness of man so keenly felt. There is the clay, but who shall find the spirit that dwelt in it? Jesus has no such sense of weakness. Believing in the fatherly and undying love of the Eternal God, He knows that death cannot harm, still less destroy, the children of God.

¶ "God is not the God of dead beings but of living beings, for all live unto him." All do not live to us; to us the dead are dead, but to God the dead are living; all live unto Him; as He sees men there are none dead. In proof of this, witness the resurrection of Lazarus. What was that miracle? Merely this:

[1] Stephen Sylvester Thomas.

God making the dead, but really living, Lazarus visible to us. To Christ Himself Lazarus was alive; to his sisters he was dead. Christ comforted them by showing them he was alive. He called the soul back to the old frame it had worn and so made Lazarus visible again. He had not been dead. Jesus spoke to him. He had a secret of communication which we have not, and having the secret He called back the soul to the old body, that He might for ever prove to us that our beloved dead are in reality alive. We have but lost the means of communication. Christ asked Lazarus to come forth and show himself that we might be assured of this truth. "I am the resurrection, and the life."[1]

¶ When the chemist has produced in his laboratory a certain desired and attested scientific result, when he has mastered the secret of some new process in nature and exhibited the product in a single sample, the problem is solved, the result is guaranteed. He may now set up his factory and invest his capital, and invite the co-operation of wealth and labour, and build up a vast collective industry with full assurance of faith upon the evidence gathered from his crucible, upon the security afforded by the laws of nature that what they have once allowed and yielded, they will always yield to the action of the same cause; and there lies in his hand the power to do a million times what he has actually effected once. The raising of Lazarus was a prompt and a majestic verification on the part of the Lord Jesus Christ of His claim to be the destined Raiser of the dead, a pledge and earnest of all that was to follow.[2]

II.

The Eternal Application.

The miraculous resurrection of Lazarus was simply a symbol of a far more important truth than the mere restoration of an earthly life conveys. It was a visual illustration of a fact which is too inward and subtle to come under the eye of observers at all. If, as indeed we are bound to do, we strive to set before ourselves with vivid particularity the various emotions which are crowded into the narrative—the bitter regret for help unbrought, the sudden awakening of vague hope, the mysterious grief of the Lord Himself, the awful suspense before the opened grave—it must be that we may the better realize that Truth which calms and satisfies them all. The miracle is nothing more than a translation

[1] D. Fairweather.

[2] G. G. Findlay, *The Things Above*, 149.

of an eternal lesson into an outward and intelligible form. The command of sovereign power, "Lazarus come forth," is but one partial and transitory fulfilment of the absolute and unchanging gospel, "I am the resurrection, and the life."

i. I am the Resurrection, and the Life.

1. "*I am* the resurrection, and the life."—"I am" in point of time, and also in respect of essential being.

(1) *In point of time.*—Christ does not think of immortality as we do. The thought of immortality is with Him involved in, and absorbed by, the idea of life. Life is a present thing and its continuance a matter of course. When life is full, and abundant, and glad, the present is enough, and past and future are unthought of. It is life, therefore, rather than immortality that Christ speaks of; a present not a future good; an expansion of the nature now, which necessarily carries with it the idea of permanence.

¶ It is the devastating mistake of ages of imperfect faith that the emphasis and crisis of life is carried forward into the next world, robbing this of its dignity, disrobing this of its loftiest motives, cheapening by withholding from it its proper fruitions. There is no juster word used among men than "probation," and none more perverted. Life is indeed probation, but the judgment that decides is in perpetual session; not for one moment is it adjourned; every hour it renders the awards that angels fulfil; daily and forever does the Christ of humanity judge according to the deeds done in this present life of humanity, and send to right or left hand destinies. There is no day of eternity more august than that which now is. There is nothing in the way of consequence to be awaited that is not now acting, no sweetness that may not now be tasted, no bitterness that is not now felt. What comes after will be but the increment of what now is, for even now we are in the eternal world. The Kingdom of heaven has come and is ever coming; its powers and processes, its rewards and punishments are to-day in full activity, mounting into ever higher expression, but never more real in one moment of time than in another.[1]

In deserts of the Holy Land I strayed,
Where Christ once lived, but seems to live no more,
On Lebanon my lonely home I made,
I heard the wind among the cedars roar,

[1] T. T. Munger, *The Freedom of Faith*, 285.

And saw, far off, the Great Sea's solemn shore:
"But 'tis a dreary wilderness," I said,
Now the prophetic spirit hence has fled:
Then, from a convent in the vale, I heard,
Slow-chanted forth, the everlasting Word,
Saying "I am he that liveth, and was dead,
And lo! I am alive for evermore."
Then forth upon my pilgrimage I fare,
Resolved to find and praise Him everywhere.[1]

(2) *In essence.*—And so we come to the second chief thought suggested by the words: "I am." The resurrection and the life are not simply through Christ but *in* Christ. "I am," He said—not I promise, or I bring, or I accomplish—"*I am* the resurrection, and the life." And when we fix our attention upon the words from this point of view, we see at once that they include deeper mysteries than we can at present fathom, that they open out glimpses of some more sublime form of being than we can at present apprehend, that they gather up in one final utterance to the world what had been said before darkly and partially of the union of the believer with his Lord and of the consequences which proceed from it. But though we can perhaps do no more, it is well that we should at least devoutly recognize that we do stand here in the face of a great mystery, which if indistinct from excess of glory, yet even now ennobles, consecrates, transfigures life; which does even now help us to feel where is the answer to difficulties which our own age has first been called to meet; which gives a vital reality to much of the language of Holy Scripture that we are tempted to treat as purely metaphorical.

¶ Whenever the Lord says, "I am," He speaks as ideal Man, as the Life, holding the power of Self-manifestation. What we see in Him is potentially in us, or we could not see it in Him. We may say we are what He is, because He is the representative of the true Man in every man. By His Incarnation this was brought into our consciousness. All are in Him by virtue of their Being, but He makes us aware of what we are. He who comes into this external relationship with us is He who is also the substance of our Being. He is the expression of the hidden Being of all, and the Promise also that each shall rise into the full consciousness of their Being, and be able to say, as did Jesus when on earth: "I and the Father are One Thing."[2]

[1] J. Gostick. [2] R. W. Corbet, *Letters from a Mystic of the Present Day*, 111.

2. "I am *the resurrection.*"—Christ is the Resurrection inasmuch as He rose again from the dead, and, further, because He has the power to raise us up also.

(1) Christ Himself died and rose again. He alone is the true pattern of the resurrection, "the Firstborn," as St. Paul and St. John style Him, "*out of* the dead." In this highest sense He not only effects but He *is* the Resurrection. He was this *inwardly*, in His own spirit and consciousness. Jesus described Himself, while on earth in mortal flesh, as "the Son of man which is in heaven." His eye pierced the veils of sense. The Father was in Him and He in the Father. But *outwardly*, as well as inwardly, Christ is the pattern of our risen life. Dying a little while after He uttered these words, Jesus Christ appeared to His disciples an embodied resurrection, as if made man over again and more worthily, Firstborn of the "sons of the resurrection." He was the same, yet mysteriously and loftily transformed.

¶ We all know the effects of the Renaissance upon the modern world. Renaissance is re-birth, regeneration, resurrection if you like. The intellectual forces of the Middle Ages had spent themselves; the greater part of Europe was lying in a sleep which might almost be described as death. But when Constantinople was captured by the Turks, many Greek scholars who had been working there had to flee to the shores of Italy, bringing with them Homer and Sophocles, Aristotle and Plato, the forgotten science and art and scholarship of the ancient world. And almost at the same time a new world of unexplored territory was revealed by explorers like Cabot and Columbus. And the result was the awakening of Europe from its death-like sleep, and the stirring of a new life that is not exhausted yet. These men, exiled scholars and brave explorers, *were* the Renaissance; they were the resurrection and the life of European learning, because it was through them and their labours that the quickening came. Now, what these men did intellectually for Europe at one period, Christ came to do morally and spiritually for the world for all time.[1]

(2) But Christ not only died and rose again; He has the power, in the fullest sense of the word, to make us do likewise. "Though he die," He says, "yet shall he live."

Did not Christ then really die, and do we not all die, even if we believe in Him? In one sense Christ did die. He suffered

[1] J. M. E. Ross, *The Self-Portraiture of Jesus*, 133.

this housing of the soul to be torn away, the tabernacle to be taken down, but He will not call it death. It does not touch the life; that flows on, an unbroken current, and rises into greater fulness. And so Christ says that those who believe in Him, and die in this sense, do not really die; though dead, they live.

Physical death is not the termination of human life. The grim fact touches only the surface life, and has nothing to do with the essential, personal being. He that believes on Jesus, and he only, truly lives, and his union with Jesus secures his possession of that eternal life, which victoriously persists through the apparent, superficial change which men call death. Nothing dies but the death which surrounds the faithful soul. For it to die is to live more fully, more triumphantly, more blessedly. So though the act of physical death remains, its whole character is changed.

¶ The grave of Albrecht Dürer, the great painter, is in the cemetery of his native city, Nuremberg. On his tombstone they have put the word *Emigravit*—he has emigrated.

I do hear
From the revolving year
A voice which cries:
"All dies;
Lo, how all dies! O seer,
And all things too arise:
All dies, and all is born;
But each resurgent morn, behold, more near the Perfect Morn."[1]

3. I am *the life*.—There is more in our Lord's words than a mere guarantee to His people of a life of some sort beyond the grave. To Christ and His Apostles, life is not a matter of mere duration; in their rich and inspiring conception the thought of quality is far more prominent than the thought of duration. God had created mankind for life—the life that is life indeed. But man had, in a most real sense, chosen death instead of life, and had made of his world a sepulchre. And now into this world of death there came this Saviour sent down from God, trampling death in all its forms under foot from the beginning of His victorious career.

It marked a new epoch in the faith in immortality when the

[1] Francis Thompson, "The Night of Forebeing."

Son of Man stood in the midst of men and said: "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." And did He not prove the mighty utterance? Whatever He touched received life. He touched dead eyes, and they saw. He touched dead ears, and they heard. He touched the fatal disease, and life sprang back into the distempered veins. He touched the dead body on the bier, and it awakened from the sleep of death. He went into the grave Himself, and with resurrection power left it empty on the third day.

ii. Whosoever liveth and believeth.

Christ, being the life, promises that "whosoever liveth . . . shall never die."

1. Whosoever *liveth.*—We must be alive in order to know what deathlessness is. We must begin to live as a soul, and not as an animal, if we want to be rid of the fear of death and the doubt of immortality. The way out of the doubts and fears which oppress us is not altogether by the gate of knowledge or of logic, but by the avenues of the spirit. To those who already share the Divine life the terrors of death are abolished. Its inevitable wrench to the spirit is mostly overcome, and its change no more than from life to life. If we are acquainted with our soul, if we have learned to live already with the immortal part of us, and to take pleasure in the things that minister to the life of that part of us, we shall not deem it such a lonesome, blank, and unbearable thing to go away with our own self, our real self, even out of this body into some other. But we must be something more than "dead in trespasses and sins," something more than choked with "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches," before this thought can be realized in us. He whose real life consists not "in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"; he whose spirit is sustained and fed by streams of love; he who lives in faith on all the Divine things; he who works out his faith in pure conduct, exalted aims, unselfish purposes, affectionate service to others,—that man does not die in death. Death only sets free for larger activity the soul which has already begun its undying developments.

¶ To live is not to be gay or idle or restless. Frivolity,

inactivity, and aimlessness seem equally remote from the true idea of living. I should say that we live only so far as we cultivate all our faculties, and improve all our advantages for God's glory. The means of living will then be our own endowments, whether of talent or influence; the aim of living, the good of men; the motive of living, the love of God. I do not say that these ideas are to enter prominently into every detail of life, any more than that in every movement we must be distinctly conscious of the vital principle physically; but just as this must necessarily exist before we can take one step, so the whole groundwork of our inner life must be these feelings to which I have alluded.[1]

¶ The Bishop of Caledonia had opened a Mission on the Skeena river, which he and his wife had carried on for a year. Then a Missionary and his wife were left in charge. And now let us hear the Bishop's own words. He says—"They recoiled from the horrors of savage life, and to our great surprise, at the end of one year, suddenly appeared at my house on the coast *en route* to England. It was too late to find a clergyman to succeed him, and a long winter's break would probably ruin the work and prospects. Before they had been in my house an hour, I had a volunteer. It was my wife. She said, 'Let me go, I will hold it together until you find somebody else.' 'Do you mean it?' I asked. 'Yes!' 'Then wait till morning, and we will discuss it.' Early in the morning, being pressed for an answer, I said 'Yes.'

"It was difficult to get a crew to face a November 'Skeena,' which freezes in hummocks from end to end; but that same day, with a year's provisions, we started. . . . It was a dismal journey for both of us, camping and sleeping on the snow being the least of the discomforts. At the end of fifteen days we arrived, and packed the provisions in the little log house. I offered my crew an extra pound a-piece if they would delay their return but a single day, but nothing would induce them to wait, lest the river would freeze. So I left her behind among Indians and miners, the only white woman within one hundred and seventy miles, and the first to ascend the river. The isolation was complete. Events forced me to visit England, but I had returned before she knew that I had left the diocese, and travelled fourteen thousand miles. . . . At the end of a year I had found an excellent man for the new Mission so that I was able to fetch away my wife. The miners said she was the best Missionary they ever had, and the Indians call her 'Mother' to this day. It was a hard time. Her entire household consisted of two Indian schoolboys."

[1] *Life and Letters of Brooke Foss Westcott*, i. 145.

Foil'd by our fellow-men, depress'd, outworn,
We leave the brutal world to take its way,
And "Patience! in another life," we say,
"The world shall be thrust down, and we up-borne."

And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn
The world's poor, routed leavings? or will they,
Who fail'd under the heat of this life's day,
Support the fervours of the heavenly morn?

No, no! the energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not begun;
And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,

From strength to strength advancing—only he,
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.[1]

2. *He shall never die.*—The quality of this life has a direct bearing on its survival beyond the grave. When God so raises the soul of man to the level of His own holy and loving life, will He allow death to destroy His handiwork? Imagine an artist carving a statue. He has chosen rare and costly materials. He has provided delicate tools. He spends long years in bringing the work to perfection. Do you think that when his purpose is almost complete he will summon his servant and bid him break the work in pieces? Imagine a master training a servant. He is very thorough, very patient, very loving. He treats the servant as a son and not as a slave. And he is well repaid by the response the servant gives: the blunders are almost past; the faults are almost conquered; there is a co-operation of sympathy and of intelligence that is almost perfect. Do you think he will then cast his servant aside like some worn-out tool? Yet that is what happens if God trains the souls of men and bestows His best gifts upon them to make them His true children, and then refuses to dower them with immortality. Christ spends Himself, He gives Himself to raise men from spiritual death to spiritual life. Will He do the greater miracle and not do the less? Will He lose His own work when it is almost complete? It is unthinkable. There is deepest reason in His words, "Because I live, ye shall

[1] Matthew Arnold.

live also"; there is unanswerable logic in the contention that when Christ has made men sharers of His holiness, He will make them sharers of His immortality as well.

In Jesus Christ the believer has an enriched spiritual experience, a more intense consciousness of union with the Divine life. The sense of spiritual renewal in Christ is in many ways a new spiritual experience for the world. God has come nearer to men in the Son of Man. Already in union with Christ there is the experience of a spiritual resurrection, which must imply the fuller resurrection of the complete life. For "if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new." We already feel the life of Christ coursing even in our mortal body. It is not we that live, but Christ liveth in us. We are conscious of having "risen with him," and we know that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.

> Be assured, come what come will,
> What once lives never dies—what here attains
> To a beginning, has no end, still gains
> And never loses aught.[1]

3. "He that *believeth* on me"—"Whosoever *believeth* on me."—Christ asks us to believe in Him, but not without first giving us a proof of His belief in us. "I came that they may have life," He said. That life was His life; He felt it in Himself, felt its infinity. And as He came, He saw the men that He was coming to; He saw all that was base about them, saw how superficial and how shallow they were. He saw them filled with sin through the love of sin, and yet He said, "I am coming to give Myself through the love of Me, to give them Myself deeper and deeper, little by little, until they shall have received Me perfectly." Look what a faith in the possibilities of human nature the Incarnation implied! The faith of Christ in man—that is what is written in the Incarnation. The faith of Christ in us—that is what is written in the visit of Christ to us, when, coming and standing directly across our path of wickedness and death, He says to us calmly and surely, "I am come that you might have life, the life of holiness which is by love of Me."

[1] Browning, *Parleyings with Certain People.*

Such life, now abundant and evermore abiding, Christ affords to all who *believe on Him*. But how is it that believing on Christ thus puts us beyond the reach and power of death? The entire truth that Christ had in mind was this: that faith in Himself, by its own law, works away from death towards life. For Christ is life; to believe on a person is to become like that person, or one with him. Hence, to believe on Christ the Life is to become a sharer with Him in whatever He is, therefore in His life. We are told that Christ could not be holden of death; faith in Him works towards the same freedom.

¶ The assimilating power of faith, that is, the power of faith to make those who believe like that in which they believe, is a recognized principle. The whole nature follows the faith, and gravitates towards its object. A moulding process goes on; faith is the workman and the object of faith is the pattern. Starting within, down amongst the desires and affections, it works outward, till the external man becomes in form, feature, and expression like the absorbing object. We meet men every day in whose faces we see avarice, lust, or conceit, as plainly as if it were imprinted on their foreheads. They have so long thought and felt under the power of these qualities that they are made over into their image. A man who worships money comes to wear the likeness of a money-worshipper down to the tips of his fingers; his eyes and nose and the very posture of his figure bear witness to the transforming power of faith. The Hindu who worships Brahma sleeping on the stars in immovable calm gets to wear a fixed expression. The mediæval saints who spent days and nights in contemplation of the crucifix, came to show the very lineaments of the man of sorrows, as art had depicted them, and sometimes, it is said, the very marks of His torture in their own bodies. It is a principle wonderful in its method and power. We are all passing into the likeness of that in which we believe. There is no need that men should be labelled, or that they should make confession with their lips. Very early the faith hangs out a label, and soon the whole man becomes a confession of its truth. You have but to look, and you will see here a voluptuary, there a sluggard; here a miser, there a scholar; here a bigot, there a sceptic; here a thinker, there a fool; here a cruel, unjust man, there one kind, generous, true; here one base throughout, there one radiant with purity. It is wonderful, this power of faith, first moulding, then revealing. It is the power of love directed by will, which together makes up faith; and as it works out so it

works within, shaping all things there in like manner. It is by this principle that Christ unites men to Himself.[1]

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker, Thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.[2]

[1] T. T. Munger, *The Freedom of Faith*, 281. [2] Browning, *Abt Vogler*.

The Tears of Jesus.

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The Tears of Jesus.

Jesus wept.—John xi. 35.

In this text, containing only the two words "Jesus wept," we have not before us the whole character of Jesus Christ; we have but one aspect of His many-sidedness, but one point in His very complex character. Yet the text is worth separate and careful study, for it is only by studying the seemingly small points that we shall in time arrive at any just appreciation of the wonder of Christ.

The subject divides itself into three branches—

I. The Causes of Christ's tears.
II. Their Nature.
III. Their Lesson to us.

I.

The Causes of Christ's Tears.

1. *Christ's humanity.*—It is difficult to realize the fact of our Lord's true humanity. It fades away from our view in the splendour of His divinity, so close was the union of man with God. But it was nevertheless a distinct manhood, as perfect in itself as that worn by any of our race. The entire record of Christ's life proves the assertion. He was born as the children are born—a partaker of their "flesh and blood"; and He was nursed as the children are nursed—growing "in wisdom and stature." He was hungry, and He ate; He was thirsty, and He drank; He was weary, and He lay down; He was fatigued, and He slept; He was smitten, and He died. Still it is no easy task to picture to ourselves the merely human sensations and tendencies which characterized the man Jesus. We believe that His human nature, sin excepted, was as ours; but it is scarcely

possible for us to feel it and imagine it, from the overshadowing glory of His higher essence. In consequence of this failure, we are apt to miss no little instruction and comfort as we read the incidents and travel over the scenes of His life. We invest the man with attributes belonging to the God, and unconsciously deify His humanity.

But the Evangelist, from the first, lays down the principle: The word was made *flesh*. "It is not with a heart of stone that the dead are raised," says Hengstenberg; and Heb. ii. 17 teaches us that he who would help the unhappy must first of all surrender his heart to feel that very suffering from which he desires to deliver them. It is a remarkable thing that the very Gospel in which the Deity of Jesus is most clearly asserted is also that which makes us best acquainted with the profoundly human side of His life.

¶ At first sight, it seems a profane absurdity to talk of God being ignorant, or in sorrow; in pain, or in sickness. Yet we are told that there was no human emotion, in itself sinless, which Jesus could not feel. Hunger, thirst, weariness; the daily discomforts of life, as well as the anguish of the passion and the cross, were as real to Him as to any one of us. Thus there were, no doubt, moments when the manhood asserted itself so strongly as for a little while to dominate, if the word be permissible, over the Godhead. We may find a parallel, though but faint and imperfect, in our own experiences. It occasionally happens that though we are intensely interested in some piece of work, we are compelled to lay it aside, because we are exhausted by hunger. Our intellectual, our real self, chafes and frets at desisting from the fascinating task, but the exhausted body refuses to continue; the brain itself even shows signs of flagging.[1]

2. *Christ's pity.*—Why did the Son of God become Son of man? Among other reasons, that He might be in perfect sympathy with us; that, as Bone of our bone, and Flesh of our flesh, He might be able to feel, not merely for us but with us, in all our difficulties and sorrows and pains. Christ's tears do not mean here what His tears meant when He wept over Jerusalem. He wept then as foreseeing what calamities their hardness of heart would bring upon the people whom He had sought to save; as thinking what might have been, had they known, in their day of grace, the

[1] Canon Bonney.

things which belonged to their peace. There would be no such thought in His mind as He drew near to the grave of His faithful servant. What drew those silent tears from Jesus was His sympathy with the mourning sisters. His tears were the answer of His human heart to the appeal of their sorrow.

¶ More helpful than all wisdom is one draught of simple human pity that will not forsake us.[1]

¶ Jesus wept not merely from the deep thoughts of His understanding, but from spontaneous tenderness; from the gentleness and mercy, the encompassing loving-kindness and exuberant fostering affection of the Son of God for His own work, the race of man. Their tears touched Him at once, as their miseries had brought Him down from heaven. His ear was open to them, and the sound of weeping went at once to His heart.[2]

3. *Christ's sorrow.*—Christ's sorrow was twofold.

(1) To begin with, may we not say that Jesus wept here for pity of the frailty of man, and the victory of death? Of course He does not stand alone in this feeling; all serious men share it with Him more or less, and the profoundest souls feel it deeply. The great literatures of the world are all shadowed by the sense of the shortness of man's life on earth, and the most moving poetry in particular vibrates to this deep undertone. And naturally so; for the fact goes deep into human existence, and shapes and colours it all through. Even the most unthinking of us feels it in his own commonplace way.

(*a*) The tears of Jesus were then in part caused by the thought of all the humiliation and suffering which *sin* had brought into His once so happy world, as exemplified in the death of Lazarus, and the bereaved and desolate home. We know that sin did cause "The Holy One of God" deep pain, though we can never tell how deep; and we may be quite sure that what He saw of its effects here did touch, and wring, His loving heart.

(*b*) He saw visibly displayed the victory of *death.* Here was the Creator of the world at a scene of death, seeing the issue of His gracious handiwork. Would He not revert in thought to the hour of creation, when He went forth from the bosom of the Father to bring all things into existence? There had been a day

[1] George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss.*

[2] J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons,* iii. 133.

when He had looked upon the work of His love, and seen that it was "very good." Whence had the good been turned to evil, the fine gold become dim? "An enemy hath done this."

Weep not for broad lands lost;
Weep not for fair hopes crost;
Weep not when limbs wax old;
Weep not when friends grow cold;
Weep not that Death must part
Thine and the best-loved heart;
Yet weep, weep all thou can—
Weep, weep, because thou art
A sin-defilèd man.[1]

(2) But there was still another thought to call forth Christ's tears. This marvellous benefit to the forlorn sisters, how was it to be attained?—At His own cost. Joseph knew he could bring joy to his brethren, and at no sacrifice of his own. Christ was bringing life to the dead by His own death. His disciples would have dissuaded Him from going into Judæa, lest the Jews should kill Him. Their apprehension was fulfilled. He went to raise Lazarus, and the fame of that miracle was the immediate cause of His seizure and crucifixion. He felt that Lazarus was wakening to life at His own sacrifice; that He was descending into the grave which Lazarus left. He felt that Lazarus was to live and He to die; the appearance of things was to be reversed; the feast was to be kept in Martha's house, but the last passover of sorrow remained for Him.

Is it impossible to think that Christ may have felt the shadow of His own great Passion reflected in some small degree in the scene before Him? "Jesus wept"; but are the tears any less real that they are shed perhaps to some extent for His own sorrow? He is rather by that very fact enabled to sympathize more truly with the griefs of others.

¶ Pain is a mere word to the being that never felt pain. "Have you ever been laid up yourself, sir?" a young man on his death-bed asked another young man who visited him by way of comfort. It revealed a longing for exact appreciation of the situation, and an instinct that true sympathy could come only from actual knowledge.[2]

[1] Trench, *Poems*, 145.

[2] H. Black, *Comfort*, 108.

II.

The Nature of Christ's Tears.

1. Jesus wept *calmly.*—In Gethsemane, Christ's own anguish, endured indeed for us, wrung the bitter drops from His eyes. On Olivet, He wept for foes resolved and doomed to perish. Near the grave of Lazarus, He wept in sympathy with loved friends. In approaching the sepulchre, He felt a tender sympathy for the grief which had possessed the heart of His friend at the moment of separation, and that which the two sisters were at that very moment feeling. The word (δακρύειν) *to weep*, does not (like κλαίειν) indicate sobs, but tears; it is the expression for a calm and gentle sorrow.

But His calmness was not attained without an effort. We read that He "groaned in the spirit and was troubled" and the words indicate a physical commotion, a bodily trembling which might be perceived by the witnesses of this scene. Such grief would have been excusable in view of all that the present scene meant to Jesus, but He mastered His most bitter grief. "Jesus wept," but the tears have nothing in them of weak or unreasonable anguish; Jesus by the grave of a dead friend, amidst the sorrow of the world, in the shadow of His Passion, could still weep calmly.

Grief should be
Like joy, majestic, equable, sedate;
Confirming, cleansing, raising, making free;
Strong to consume small troubles; to commend
Great thoughts, grave thoughts, thoughts lasting to the end.[1]

2. Jesus wept *reservedly.*—In the sorrow of our Lord there was no ostentation. It was necessary that our Lord's grief should be manifested for the comfort of the mourners, and for the trial of the hearts of the spectators; but beyond this He had no wish to exhibit His sorrow. The affectation and vain-glory which court applause for any quality whatever, were utter strangers to His meek and lowly mind.

¶ St. Francis is said to have shed so many tears that they affected his power of vision. Of a certain St. Abraham it is

[1] Aubrey de Vere.

recorded that no day passed after his conversion without his shedding tears. Bishop Andrewes's *Devotions* were so blistered with tears that his editors could scarcely read them. Of an old Scotswoman, turned from a life of great sin, it is told that she actually "wept her eyes out." From all such tears, of course, our Saviour was free.[1]

3. Jesus wept *unashamedly.* — Jesus wept and was not ashamed of His human weakness. He could have repressed His tears—many men do so habitually. No doubt there may be great sorrow, very great sorrow, where there is no open expression of it. The Saviour could doubtless, if so He wished, have hidden His grief; but He did not choose to do so, for He was never unnatural. Jesus wept, as the mourners about Him wept. The sight of such sorrow overpowered Him, and He could not refrain. That was a true manhood which felt this touch of nature, and broke into tears. There was no stoicism in His constitution. There was no attempt to restrain His sympathies, and educate Himself into a hard and inhuman indifference. Neither was He ashamed of possessing our ordinary sensibilities. He felt it no weakness to weep in public with them that wept.

¶ It is no part of heroism to affect insensibility to suffering. The strongest manhood has its roots in tender feeling. The ideal man's emotional nature is as quick, powerful, urgent, undeniable as his intellect is lofty and his will unbending. The patriarchs are all represented as men of tender feeling. "Abraham came to weep." "Jacob lifted up his voice, and wept." "Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept."[2]

¶ The tremendous figure which fills the Gospels towers in this respect, as in every other, above all the thinkers who ever thought themselves tall. His pathos was natural, almost casual. The Stoics, ancient and modern, were proud of concealing their tears. He never concealed His tears; He showed them plainly on His open face at any daily sight.[3]

III.

The Lesson of Christ's Tears.

1. *They are a pledge.*—Christ's tears speak about the future, and show us what Jesus will always be. Everything done by

[1] T. Marjoribanks, *In the Likeness of Men*, 41.
[2] J. Strachan, *Hebrew Ideals*, i. 176. [3] G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*.

Christ on earth was done for all time. The meaning of His actions was not confined to the persons and the places of the hour. They stand out as parables to teach the world. When Jesus wept with Martha and Mary, His tears promised that all His suffering followers to the end of time should have His pitying regard.

¶ Job's rebellion came from the thought that God, as a sovereign, is far off, and that, for His pleasure, His creature suffers. Our own theory comes to the mourner with the assurance, "Your suffering, just as it is in you, is God's suffering. No chasm divides you from God. He is not remote from you even in His eternity. He is here. His eternity means merely the completeness of His experience. But that experience is inclusive. Your sorrow is one of the included facts." I do not say, "God sympathizes with you from without, would spare you if He could, pities you with helpless external pity merely as a father pities his children." I say, "God here sorrows, not *with* but *in* your sorrow. Your grief is identically His grief, and what you know as your loss, God knows as His loss just in and through the very moment when you grieve."[1]

¶ It is our great mistake, I think, to set Divine suffering in a bare fact of history come and gone, an episode of once and no more, and to preach our sharing of it only as an emotional transaction and an effort of the good will. It is this, but more, far more. I share all my pain with God, and He bears our griefs whether we see Him or are blind. Not over against me, holding back a hand which might help, but side by side, nay, "closer than breathing," within the inmost hiding-place of my suffering self, He suffers too and bears all pain with me. Therefore, if I will, His strength may be my strength, His love may succour me; new life and light may arise within me to be and to remain my own, and to turn even suffering into joy.[2]

2. *They are an example.*

(1) The following of Christ does not free us from suffering. It often leads to it. Not only are we liable to the ills which press upon humanity, but special chastenings are set apart for us. Believers have sufferings in common with others; but they have also trials adapted particularly to themselves. The object of Christianity is to train the soul; and it takes advantage of

[1] J. Royce.

[2] *A Modern Mystic's Way.*

suffering to aid it in the process of tuition. It works in the sphere of experience.

Genuine grief will have genuine vent; it demands expression. It is right to grieve, and even deeply grieve, over the sorrows that befall us as we go through the world. It is an inhuman spirit that says, "I will not grieve," whether the determination springs from a proud defiance of fate, or from an exaggerated view of the nothingness of the creature before the Creator, or from an impossible attempt to ignore the bitterness of the means He uses in the great worthiness of the ends He is bringing about. On the contrary, grief is natural and right for the human spirit. It is the confession of the subordination of our lives to the heavenly will, and, at the same time, of the existence in us of those strange capacities of pain and anguish, through which the perfecting of our nature is so largely brought about.

¶ Christ, the model of manhood, the mirror of all that was noble and dignified, did not deny Himself the relief of tears; and shall men be looked upon as effeminate, as falling from the dignity of their sex, if, with emotions like Christ, they shed tears like Him? No. He who would aspire to a transcendental apathy that man was not made for, and which Jesus despised, he who would do such violence to his nature insults his Creator, and would foolishly set himself above the example of his Redeemer. Instead of raising himself above humanity, he sinks beneath its level. The brow that never wore a smile, is not more unnatural than the eye that never glistened with a tear.[1]

(2) Once more the tears of Jesus bid us sympathize with all sad hearts, and seek to comfort them. For here, as always, He is an example to the sons of God. Our sympathy is, indeed, a weak thing, compared with the sympathy of Jesus; yet it can do something to help others. We are made for one another. We have a common root. Life is the whole of life. There is a circulation of the blood of the race as well as of the body. We have no exclusive rights to our sorrows, nor has any trouble exclusive rights over us. That which Christ did He bids us do. He bids us follow Him in His sympathy. He bids us have sympathy with man; not in the way of condescension; not as angels stooping to condole; not as the pure mourning over the

[1] J. Eadie, *The Divine Love*, 294.

impure, but as men touching to heal; as men not loving the sin yet loving the sinner; not as breathing by choice infected air, but as infected men nursing, cherishing, giving ourselves for the infected.

¶ The practical weakness of the vast mass of modern pity for the poor and the oppressed is precisely that it is merely pity; the pity is pitiful, but not respectful. Men feel that the cruelty to the poor is a kind of cruelty to animals. They never feel that it is injustice to equals; nay, it is treachery to comrades. This dark, scientific pity, this brutal pity, has an elemental sincerity of its own, but it is entirely useless for all ends of social reform.[1]

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens.*

Fruitfulness through Death.

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FRUITFULNESS THROUGH DEATH.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.—John xii. 24.

1. JESUS was always alive to the beautiful and instructive analogies between the natural and the moral world; but this occasion, when He illustrated heavenly truth by the striking comparison of the grain of wheat, was one of more than ordinary interest. The Apostles Andrew and Philip had approached Him on the part of certain Greeks, with the request that they might be introduced to Him of whom, no doubt, they had heard much. It is probable, since Greek Jews are called Hellenists and not Greeks in the New Testament, that these persons were proselytes of the gate from among the nations where the Greek tongue was then spoken. As they had been won over from heathenism into acceptance of the Mosaic religion, they seem to have awakened in the prophetic soul of Christ the conception of a time when the heathen would flock to His spiritual standard, and the prince of this world would be cast out from his kingdom. The next associated thought was the means for such a great and fruitful result, which was no other than His death. He who was thus waited on by men from strange lands would, in a very few days, be hanging on a cross, under condemnation as a malefactor. But His death and burial, so far from destroying His cause, were to become the life of the world. And the same in substance holds good of those who will follow Him. Just as the seed committed to the earth suffers a separation of its parts and is buried before it can germinate, so man must, in a spiritual sense, pass through death before he can truly live and be to others a source of life. If he abideth alone, he is unfruitful; but if he die, he bringeth forth much fruit.

2. Jesus is just about to be conclusively rejected by His own people; just on the point of being crucified by them. Some have shut their eyes, and stopped their ears, and hardened their hearts in the most determined manner against Him and His teaching; others, not insensible to His merits, have meanly and heartlessly concealed their convictions, fearing the consequences of an open profession. Pharisaism, Sadduceeism, ignorance, indifference, fickleness, cowardice, have confronted Him on every side. How refreshing, amidst abounding contradiction, stupidity, and dull insusceptibility, this intimation brought to Him at the eleventh hour: "Here are certain Greeks who are interested in you, and want to see you." The words fall on His ear like a strain of sweet music; the news is as reviving to His burdened spirit as the sight of a spring to a weary traveller in a sandy desert; and in the fulness of His joy He exclaims: "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." Rejected by His own people, He is consoled by the inspiring assurance that He shall be believed on in the world, and accepted by the outlying nations as all their salvation and all their desire.

3. The thoughts of Jesus at this time were as deep as His emotions were intense. Specially remarkable is the first thought to which He gave utterance in these words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." He speaks here with the solemnity of one conscious that He is announcing a truth new and strange to His hearers. His object is to make it credible and comprehensible to His disciples that death and increase may go together. He points out to them that the fact is so in the case of grain; and He would have them understand that the law of increase, not only in *spite* but in *virtue* of death, will hold equally true in His own case. "A grain of wheat, by dying, becometh fruitful; so I must die in order to become, on a large scale, an object of faith and source of life. During My lifetime I have had little success. Few have believed, many have disbelieved; and they are about to crown their unbelief by putting Me to death. But My death, so far from being, as they fancy, My defeat and destruction, will be but the beginning of My glorification. After I have been crucified, I

shall begin to be believed in extensively as the Lord and Saviour of men."

4. It is not at all difficult to see why Jesus laid special and weighty emphasis on the fact that death, self-surrender, self-renunciation, self-sacrifice, is the condition of all life, or why He called the special and earnest attention of the Greeks to it. For not only is the truth itself a fundamental truth of His Gospel and Kingdom, lying at the very root both of Christian theology and of Christian experience, and finding its supreme expression in the Cross; not only is it repugnant to man's general bent and inclination—for who cares to impose on himself either a yoke or a cross?—but it also ran right in the teeth of Greek thought and civilization. Self-culture and self-enjoyment were the master words with the Greeks—the chief good of human life, the supreme aim, the ruling bent of the whole Grecian world, as we may learn from their literature, their art, their political economy, their social and civic institutions; from which we may also learn how miserably, in pursuing this aim, they fell short of the ends for which man was created and made. So that in calling them to substitute self-renunciation for self-culture, and self-sacrifice for self-gratification, the Lord Jesus was virtually asking them to reverse the whole bent of their thought and conduct, and to set before themselves an ideal the very opposite to that which they had hitherto pursued.

I.

Death the Condition of Fruitfulness in Nature.

The illustration which our Saviour employs is generic. Take a particle of grain into your hand. It is round and complete; hard and self-contained. It seems to be dead, but there lies within it the possibility of a wondrous and manifold life. The mystery of life sleeps within it. The beauty of summer lies hidden in its dark and narrow breast. But of it the paradox is true, that it is dead, because it has not died. It must die in order to become alive. It must be cast away from the hand of the sower, fall into the ground, and be buried in darkness. Its outer form must be broken up and decay, that the dormant life

within it may be awakened, and manifested, and its beautiful and manifold being come out of the prison-house of its loneliness, and wave and rustle and shine in the sunlight. Unless it go through this process, it remains a lonely and unproductive seed. Every seed is alone until it dies. It may be laid up with other seeds in the store house; but in the midst of multitudes it is alone. It has no living union with any, being cut off from the universal life; and the reason why it escapes from its loneliness through death is, that thereby its individual life is placed in living contact with the all-pervading life of nature. When it is embedded in the soil, it is no longer alone, but unites itself with the universal life; and thus the day of its death is the day of its birth to a higher life.

¶ Every annual plant dies when it has produced blossom and fruit; every individual branch in a tree which corresponds with an annual plant also dies when it has blossomed and fruited. It is interesting to notice the strange effect of the effort to flower in the American aloe. It appears to exhaust all its energies, so that the huge, fleshy leaves, which before stood firm and erect, gradually shrink, shrivel, and droop as the process of inflorescence advances, and the plant becomes a mere ghost of its former self. So, too, the Talipat palm, which lives to a great age and attains a lofty stature, flowers only once, but it bears an enormous quantity of blossoms, succeeded by a crop of nuts sufficient to supply a large district with seed, while the tree immediately perishes from the exhaustion of over-production. These are beautiful illustrations of the natural love of self-sacrifice.[1]

¶ This law of self-sacrifice is embedded in nature. Minot, the embryologist, and Drummond, the scientist, tell us that only by losing its life does the cell save it. The new science exhibits the body as a temple, constructed out of cells, as a building is made of bricks. Just as some St. Peter's represents strange marble from Athens, beauteous woods from Cyprus, granite from Italy, porphyry from Egypt, all brought together in a single cathedral, so the human body is a glorious temple built by those architects called living cells. When the scientist searches out the beginning of bird or bud or acorn he comes to a single cell. Under the microscope that cell is seen to be absorbing nutrition through its outer covering. But when the cell has attained a certain size its life is suddenly threatened. The centre of the cell is seen to be so far from the surface that it can no longer draw in the nutrition

[1] Hugh Macmillan.

from without. The bulk has outrun the absorbing surface. "The alternative is very sharp," says the scientist, "the cell must divide or die." Only by losing its life and becoming two cells can it save its life.

Later on, when each of the two cells has grown again to the size of the original one, the same peril threatens them and they too must divide or die. And when, through this law of saving life by losing it, nature has made sure the basis for bud and bird, for beast and man, then the principle of sacrifice goes on to secure beauty of the individual plant or animal and perpetuity for the species. In the centre of each grain of wheat there is a golden spot that gives a yellow cast to the fine flour. That spot is called the germ. When the germ sprouts and begins to increase, the white flour taken up as food begins to decrease. As the plant waxes, the surrounding kernel wanes. The life of the higher means the death of the lower. In the orchard also the flower must fall that the fruit may swell. If the young apple grows large, it must begin by pushing off the blossom. But by losing the lower bud the tree saves the higher fruit.[1]

First the grain, and then the blade—
The one destroyed, the other made;
Then stalk and blossom, and again
The gold of newly minted grain.

So Life, by Death the reaper cast
To earth, again shall rise at last;
For 'tis the service of the sod
To render God the things of God.[2]

II.

Death the Condition of Fruitfulness in the Life of Christ.

1. *The need for Christ's death.*—A comparison of the good done by the life of Christ with that done by His death shows how truly He judged when He declared that it was by His death He should effectually gather all men to Him. His death, like the dissolution of the seed, seemed to terminate His work, but really was its germination. So long as He lived, it was but His single strength that was used; He abode alone. There was great virtue in His life—great power for the healing, the instruction, the

[1] N. D. Hillis, *The Investment of Influence*, 159. [2] John B. Tabb.

elevation of mankind. In His brief public career He suggested much to the influential men of His time, set all men who knew Him a-thinking, aided many to reform their lives, and removed a large amount of distress and disease. He communicated to the world a mass of new truth, so that those who have lived after Him have stood at quite a different level of knowledge from that of those who lived before Him. And yet how little of the proper results of Christ's influence, how little understanding of Christianity, do you find even in His nearest friends until He died. By the visible appearance and the external benefits and the false expectations His greatness created, the minds of men were detained from penetrating to the spirit and mind of Christ. It was expedient for them that He should go away, for until He went they depended on His visible power, and His spirit could not be wholly received by them. They were looking at the husk of the seed, and its life could not reach them. They were looking for help from Him instead of themselves becoming like Him.

¶ When Jesus was upon the earth, the Spirit of God was in some peculiar sense associated with, and confined to, His person; and He taught His disciples that He must needs depart from them, that the Spirit might be poured out in larger measure. "I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." And, therefore, He departed from the world, that He might come nearer to it; inasmuch as a spiritual presence is nearer than a bodily presence. The one living temple of God was broken down and removed out of sight, that every Christian might be a temple of the Holy One.[1]

¶ This truth is not here spoken for the first time. It is the truth wrapt up in the first promise respecting the woman's seed, the man with the bruised heel. It is the truth to which Abel's sacrifice pointed so explicitly. It is the truth coming out in all the Levitical sacrifices and rites. It is the truth uttered by prophets: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days." It is the truth announced by apostles: "Without shedding of blood is no remission." It is the truth to which such prominence is given in the Apocalypse, when the Son of God is seen as the Lamb slain, and when the saints sing, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."[2]

[1] Fergus Ferguson. [2] Horatius Bonar.

2. *The fruit of Christ's death.*—As seed produces grain of its own kind, so Christ produces men like Christ. He ceasing to do good in this world as a living man, a multitude of others by this very cessation are raised in His likeness. By His death we receive both inclination and ability to become with Him sons of God. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them." By His death He has effected an entrance for this law of self-surrender into human life, has exhibited it in a perfect form, and has won others to live as He lived.

¶ Who shall measure the fruitfulness of that one death? It is the source of all true thought, of all holy feeling, of all noble action, of all the heavenly graces of the Spirit. We see but the beginning of what it is designed to bear. The day alone will declare it; that day when Jesus will appear at the head of the whole family of God, saying, "Behold I and the children which God has given me."[1]

¶ The voluntary death of the Son of God, His self-sacrifice, put mankind in a new position. He came back from the grave with the powers of Godhead no longer in abeyance. He came back to act no longer according to the restrictions which He had imposed on Himself during those previous three and thirty years; no longer to confine Himself to man's condition, to be seen only in one place, heard only by one company, teaching a handful of men; but He was to act henceforth in the plenitude of Godhead. He was to give efficacy to the work of those three years of His ministry, He was to fill His sacraments with grace, to make them channels for conveying and renewing life, for imparting the life that was in Himself to His members. He was to write His new law on the heart, *i.e.* to work it into the mind, to make it men's pleasure to obey. He was to perform to the end of time moral miracles, corresponding to those first physical ones. The Apostles He had trained were to perpetuate a succession to the end of time. The society He founded was never to be broken up. The prayer He had issued, whenever earnestly offered, should be supported by His own intercession. The cross He died on should be for ever dear. Not only the literal cross should be honoured, be worn as an ornament and decoration, be lifted high over cities, wave in banners, be the ground-plan of cathedrals; but, far more important

[1] Fergus Ferguson.

than these outward effects, men should carry out the idea of the cross, call their trials crosses, take them up in His Spirit, bear them meekly, patiently, as He had borne His.[1]

III.

Death to Self the Condition of Fruitfulness in the Christian Life.

1. The law of the seed is the law of human life. If we use our life for present and selfish gratification and to satisfy our present cravings, we lose it for ever. If we renounce self, yield ourselves to God, spend our life for the common good, irrespective of recognition or the lack of it, personal pleasure or the absence of it, although our life may thus seem to be lost, it is finding its best and highest development and passes into life eternal. Our life is a seed now, not a developed plant, and it can become a developed plant only by our taking heart to cast it from us and sow it in the fertile soil of other men's needs. This will seem, indeed, to disintegrate it and fritter it away, and leave it a contemptible, obscure, forgotten thing; but it does, in fact, set free the vital forces that are in it, and give it its fit career and maturity.

¶ This may be called a dying life, when a man for the love of God refuses to gratify his senses and take his natural pleasure, and follow his own will; and as many lusts as he dies to, so many deaths does he offer to God, and so many fruits of life will he receive in return. For in what measure a man dies to himself, and grows out of himself, in the same measure does God, who is our Life, enter into him.[2]

¶ One night I got a letter from one of the students of the University of Edinburgh, page after page of agnosticism and atheism. I went over to see him, and spent a whole afternoon with him, and did not make the slightest impression. At Edinburgh University we have a Students' Evangelistic Meeting on Sunday nights, at which there are eight hundred or one thousand men present. A few nights after this, I saw that man in the meeting, and next to him sat another man whom I had seen occasionally at the meetings. I did not know his name, but I wanted to find out more about my sceptic, so when the meeting was over, I went

[1] H. W. Burrows. [2] Tauler.

up to him and said, "Do you happen to know —— ?"—"Yes," he replied, "it is he that has brought me to Edinburgh."—"Are you an old friend?" I asked.—"I am an American, a graduate of an American University," he said. "After I had finished there I wanted to take a post-graduate course, and finally decided to come to Edinburgh. In the dissecting-room I happened to be placed next to ——, and I took a singular liking to him. I found out that he was a man of very remarkable ability, though not a religious man, and I thought I might be able to do something for him. A year passed and he was just where I found him." He certainly was blind enough, because it was only two or three weeks before that that he wrote me that letter. "I think you said," I resumed, "that you only came here to take a year of the post-graduate course."—"Well," he said, "I packed my trunks to go home, and I thought of this friend, and I wondered whether a year of my life would be better spent to go and start in my profession in America, or to stay in Edinburgh and try to win that one man for Christ, and I stayed."—"Well," I said, "my dear fellow, it will pay you; you will get that man." Two or three months passed, and it came to the last night of our meetings. We have men in Edinburgh from every part of the world. Every year, five or six hundred of them go out never to meet again, and in our religious work we get very close to one another, and on the last night of the year we sit down together in our common hall to the Lord's Supper. This is entirely a students' meeting. On that night we get in the members of the Theological Faculty, so that things may be done decently and in order. Hundreds of men are there, the cream of the youth of the world, sitting down at the Lord's table. Many of them are not members of the Church, but are there for the first time pledging themselves to become members of the Kingdom of God. I saw —— sitting down and handing the communion cup to his American friend. He had got his man. A week after he was back in his own country. I do not know his name; he made no impression in our country, nobody knew him. He was a subject of Christ's kingdom, doing His work in silence and in humility. A few weeks passed and —— came to see me. I said, "What do you come here for?"—He said, "I want to tell you I am going to be a medical missionary." It was worth a year, was it not?[1]

2. The seed must die if a harvest is to spring from it. That is the law for all moral and spiritual reformations. Every cause must have its martyrs. No man can be fruit-bearing unless he

[1] *The Life of Henry Drummond*, 338.

sacrifices himself. We shall not "quicken" our fellows unless we "die," either literally or by the not less real martyrdom of rigid self-crucifixion and suppression. But that necessity is not only for Apostles or missionaries of great causes; it is the condition of all true, noble life, and prescribes the path not only for those who would live for others, but for all who would truly live their own lives. Self-renunciation guards the way to the "tree of life." That lesson was specially needed by "Greeks," for ignorance of it was the worm that gnawed the blossoms of their trees, whether of art or of literature. It is no less needed by our sensuously luxurious and eagerly acquisitive generation. The world's war-cries to-day are two—"Get!" "Enjoy!" Christ's command is, "Renounce!" And in renouncing we shall realize both of these other aims, which they who pursue them alone never attain.[1]

¶ The apparent death of a cause is sometimes but the beginning of its true and world-wide life. Let it alone, and it will remain alone; but persecute it—threaten it with death, and you only increase its vitality. When you try to chase a truth out of sight you only chase it into public notice. When you think you have exterminated it, cut it in pieces or burned it, there springs up around you a thousand witnesses to the truth that seemed to be dead. Every drop of blood shed has a voice, and cries from the ground. It is the truth of this text that is expressed in the familiar words, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.[2]

¶ You have heard of Henry Martyn, the Cornishman, of whom Cornishmen are justly proud. Though with all the devotion of a saint he laboured to carry the story of the Cross to the hearts of the heathen, perseveringly and without complaint, he saw but little result. His death did what his life could not do. The noble self-sacrifice was not in vain. The news of his death sent a thrill of interest and love through many English hearts, which resulted in a deeper sense of responsibility towards the heathen, which has not died away. The corn of wheat fell into the ground, and died, and brought forth much fruit.[3]

But all through life I see a Cross,
  Where sons of God yield up their breath:
There is no gain except by loss,
  There is no life except by death,

[1] A. Maclaren. [2] Fergus Ferguson. [3] W. R. Hutton, *Low Spirits*, 64.

And no full vision but by Faith,
Nor glory but by bearing shame,
Nor Justice but by taking blame;
And that Eternal Passion saith,
"Be emptied of glory and right and name."[1]

3. If a man does not die to himself, to his selfishness, to his own will; if he is not born to a new life, to a life of renunciation, of expansion and of love, he remains alone—alone with regard to God, and with regard to all creatures in the universe,—alone in the present life, and alone in the life to come. The life of the man who is not dead to himself in order to live again spiritually, the life whose principle is selfishness, is a perpetual moral solitude: and there is no chastisement more frightful than that eternal solitude which is its inevitable result. To escape that fatal isolation, to have on earth and in heaven loved hearts which understand us, which beat in sympathy with our own, can be secured but in one way—that is, to die to ourselves, to our lusts; it is to crucify our selfishness as Jesus Christ was crucified, in order to be born again with Jesus Christ to a new life, the principle of which is love—love to God and love to man.

The measure of our willingness to deny ourselves in order to do good, is the measure, also, of the good that we actually will do. If we do for Christ and for our fellow-men only that which costs us nothing, we shall do but little good, and that little will scarcely be worth the doing. Cost, sacrifice, self-denial, toil, generosity, self-forgetfulness, the laying down, every day, in whole or in part, of even life itself—this is ever the Divine condition of usefulness, the price we must ever pay in order to be benefactors to our fellow-men or helpers to advance the Kingdom of Christ in the world.

¶ Annihilation of self; *Selbsttödtung*, as Novalis calls it; casting yourself at the footstool of God's throne, "To live or to die forever; as Thou wilt, not as I will." Brother, hadst thou never, in any form, such moments in thy history? Thou knowest them not even by credible rumour? Well, thy earthly path was peaceabler, I suppose. But the Highest was never in thee, the Highest will never come out of thee. Thou shalt at best abide by the stuff; as cherished house-dog, guard the stuff,—perhaps with enormous gold-collars and provender: but the battle, and the

[1] Walter C. Smith, "*Olrig Grange.*"

hero-death, and victory's fire-chariot carrying men to the Immortals, shall never be thine. I pity thee; brag not, or I shall have to despise thee.[1]

The great obdurate world I know no more,
The clanging of the brazen wheels of greed,
The taloned hands that build the miser's store,
The stony streets where feeble feet must bleed.
No more I walk beneath thy ashen skies,
With pallid martyrs cruelly crucified
Upon thy predetermined Calvaries:
I, too, have suffered, yea, and I have died!
Now, at the last, another road I take
Thro' peaceful gardens, by a lilied way,
To those low eaves beside the silver lake,
Where Christ waits for me at the close of day.
Farewell, proud world! In vain thou callest me.
I go to meet my Lord in Galilee.

[1] Carlyle, *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, i. 89.

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